

# DIAMOND~DICK

BOYS BEST

## JR. WEEKLY JR.

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. - Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 301.

Price, Five Cents.

### DIAMOND DICK JR'S DIAMOND CLEW

THE DUKE OF POKEROPOLIS



DIABLO, WITH UPLIFTED BLUDGEON SPRANG TOWARD BERTIE AS THE "DUKE OF POKEROPOLIS" CREPT FORWARD.



# DIAMOND~DICK

BOYS BEST

## JR. WEEKLY JR.

*Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1902, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 301.

NEW YORK, July 19, 1902.

Price Five Cents.

## Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Diamond Clew;

OR,

## THE DUKE OF POKEROPOLIS.

By the author of "DIAMOND DICK."

### ENTREE.

A scene more weird, more wild, it would be difficult for the imagination to conjure.

It is in the mountain fastness, and in a secret crypt of some old-time place of worship of a people whose very name is tradition, and whose history is lost in the abyss of oblivion.

At one side stands an altar containing an ever-burning fire, and by the altar a being whose appearance might strike terror to the very fiends of darkness. A giant in stature, wearing only a girdle of skins about his loins, he leans upon a heavy bludgeon.

In the foreground is a woman, in frontier dress, at whose feet several bloodhounds lie crouched. Before her is a person, whether man or woman let us reserve for future statement, to whom the woman has been earnestly speaking, and whose face seems filled with commingled hope and fear, courage and apprehension. That it is a trying moment needs no attesting.

"And now, go forth!" cries the woman, at last. "Strike the blow, and happiness shall be yours; vengeance will have been mine."

"And if I fail—what if I fail?"

"Death and desolation, swift, certain, unavoidable!"

"Very well, I go. I have seen your magic, I have peered into the future to a certain point, but beyond that point all is veiled and obscure. I trust blindly, and if you fail me—if your magic proves false, your prophecy untrue, then beware——"

"Hold! Have done with threats. Diablo will conduct you home. Get you gone!"

The hideous creature mentioned left the altar and led the way.

### CHAPTER I.

#### A NECKTIE PARTY IN PROGRESS.

The wild *mêlée* came to its termination as suddenly as it had begun, and Diamond Dick, Jr., was a



prisoner in the hands of the wild, woolly and untamed denizens of Pokeropolis.

But it was not a bloodless victory, by any means, for every bark of Bertie's guns had brought a man to the ground, either dead or hard hit, for Bertie had made a fight for his life against even such terrible odds as that.

"Now, then, whose hoss is it?" demanded the Duke of Pokeropolis, exultingly.

"It is my horse, all the same," cried Bertie, fearlessly and furiously. "You just release me and give me half a chance at you, and I'll cram your infernal lie down your throat!"

"Haw, haw! That is all bluster, now that you are cornered. Do you know what is goin' to happen next on this hyer programme?"

"I know what will happen next, if I get——"

"Yes, I s'pose so, sonny; but that 'if' is the biggest one ye ever run up against in yer born days. Thar is goin' to be a necktie party right hyer and now, and you are goin' to be the special 'traction. D'ye see?"

"I hear what you say, you woman murderer——"

The Duke of Pokeropolis gave a great start.

Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, shot had struck home, whatever might be its hidden significance.

"What do you mean?" the Duke thundered, his face suddenly waxing pale and furious. "What do you mean by that, I demand?"

"You seem to know what I mean," said Bertie, coolly.

The rhythmic thud-thud of a swift-coming horse's hoof-strokes heard at that moment caused the whole crowd to turn and look in the direction of the approach.

A woman was dashing down upon the scene.

Mounted upon a big bay horse, her hair, flying to the breeze, looked not unlike a golden mantle caught loosely at her neck.

On her head was a new white sombrero, the front brim now flared up by her rapid flight, while her costume of violet and yellow gave her a most striking personality.

No wonder that the business of the moment was suspended while all stood and gazed.

A few strides more brought her up to the crowd.

"Well, citizens, what appears to be the excitement here?" she asked, running a rapid glance over them all.

All were struck by her beauty, for she was beautiful indeed, and as her lips parted in a half smile her handsome teeth served to emphasize her general comeliness.

"We have caught a hoss thief and are goin' to give him a royal send-off for the sake of reform and the good of the country," answered the Duke of Pokeropolis, doffing his hat with politeness as he said it.

"A horse thief—eh? He does not look it."

"Looks do not count for much, except in the feminine article," rejoined the Duke, dropping his rough manner of speech and bowing low before the newcomer.

"I know," with a careless wave of the hand, to signify her disregard for his politeness, "but have you got the proof against him?"

"The proof?" in a tone of surprise.

"That was what I said."

"What more proof do we want, when he comes here astride of my horse that was stolen a week ago?"

"Why, you want the proof that he stole it, of course."

"What is it to you, pretty one?"

"No compliments, if you please. I chip in because I like the looks of the chap, and because you all seem to be dead against him."

Bertie was interested.

He admired the frank, fearless manner of this young woman, whoever she was.

"Well, you are on the wrong side this time," said the Duke, politely, but firmly. "He is the man we want, and we are going to make him stretch hemp?"

"What have you to say, prisoner?"

"Not much use saying anything, the way it looks," answered Bertie.

"Are you guilty?"

"No."

"How came you by the horse?"

"I have owned it for some time. This fellow lies in claiming it."

"And what do you say to that?" turning again to the Duke of Pokeropolis.

"I say it is an infernal lie!" cried the Duke. "I was down in Tombstone with this horse, and there I saw this fellow. My horse and he turned up missing at the same time, and I was told that he had gone off with it. I gave it up for gone, of course, and what



was my surprise to see him come riding into this camp a little while ago."

"Then you have proof that it is your property?"

"Miss Handsome, patience is going to cease to be a virtue here pretty soon. We don't have to answer these questions of yours, and I have only done it out of politeness."

"That's what's the matter," spoke up one, Gib Dillon, who enjoyed the distinction of being "boss" of the town.

"I only wanted to be sure there was no mistake," said the young woman.

"Well, rest assured that we know what we are about."

"I am convinced that you must. I do not see why you want to hang a man just for fun, and I yield the point. Go on with the funeral."

Bertie was surprised at this sudden turn of front.

He did not know what to make of it.

"I thought you would show sense," cried the Duke. "I am goin' to make your acquaintance further, if you don't object."

"I have no objection; not the slightest."

"Very well, then; I'll begin right away. Gib, you and the boys see to that chap, and be sure his collar fits him, will you?"

"That's what we will," was the immediate shout. "We will give him one of the greatest old send-offs he ever heard tell of, too, or I am no oracle. I bet we will give hoss thieves a lesson!"

"Then go ahead and be about it."

"Ye give us leave to do et jist as we please?"

"Yes, do as you please with him, while I pay court to this vision of loveliness that has suddenly dropped down——"

"If you have any desire to scrape acquaintance with me, sir, you will have to come right down to the commonplace in your talk," the young woman interrupted.

"That so?"

"Yes, I want no frills."

"Well, if that is the verdict, so be it."

"What is your name?"

"I have no name; I am simply the Duke—the Duke of Pokeropolis—so-called. What am I to call you?"

"To my friends I am Fancy Fan."

"Fancy Fan, hey? Well, now, that is no slouch of

a name. And what are you to your foes, if you are that to your friends only?"

"To my foes I'm a Tartar."

There was something chic and sprightly about this young woman.

It was something that captivated the Duke of Pokeropolis at once, and he seemed to have lost interest in the prisoner.

"That is well answered," he said. "I would like to know more about you, Fancy Fan. May I have the honor of escorting you to the Palace Hotel, the best in town?"

"Yes, after we have seen this necktie party to the finish."

"What! you want to see it out?"

"Yes; having your assurance that you have made no mistake, sir."

"Well, there is no mistake about it, so you are just in time for the ball. What is going to be done, Gib?"

There seemed to be a little delay about making ready.

"Why, ther boys air bound to do et right up in style, that is all, and as you said we could do as we pleased——"

"Yes, yes; but what are they going to do?"

"Ye know that mad maverick that was chased into camp t'other day?"

"Yes; what of it?"

"Ther owner of the Palace expected to beef et as soon as it got the fever out of its blood."

"I know, I know; but what use can you make of it in this matter?"

"What use? Why, we aire goin' to give this cuss hyer a ride on et to ther place of execution, and thar we are goin' to tie him to the critter's tail and let ther beast do the rest."

"And who thought of that idea?"

"Your'n truly."

"Well, go ahead; it makes no difference to me as long as you don't let him get away. No horse thief has got any business to live in this country, my way of thinking."

"Right you be. Ha! Hyer they come!"

At that moment a roar and bellow was heard, and six or eight of the roughest men of the camp appeared with a wild steer in their charge.

It was an ugly brute, and its tapering horns were



almost like two gleaming swords. Two men were holding fast to each of these two horns.

Other men were at the sides of the beast, and yet another was twisting its tail to urge it along, and at the same time further enrage it.

The maverick had come running into town the day before, from nobody knew where, and the "boys" all had rare fun capturing it. And, as said, it had been turned over to the keeper of the hotel.

Now some reckless spirit had suggested the use we have heard Gib Dillon mention, and all his ilk were eager to see the sport.

If there were any who did not countenance such "sport" they were so sadly in the minority that they did not dare speak out in opposition to the proposed scheme.

The steer was half dragged and half carried to the scene, and there Diamond Dick, Jr., with his hands bound, and with a "riata" around his neck, was placed upon its back, when, all being ready, the mob escorted him to the place intended for his hanging.

## CHAPTER II.

### A GIRL OF GRIT—A DARING RESCUE.

People of the East have little idea of the value that is placed upon a horse stolen as compared with the life of the thief in the far Southwest.

A man who has killed another man, in fair fight or otherwise, has some chance for his life; but a convicted horse thief none at all. Once public opinion pronounces him guilty, that settles it.

He is hanged, and usually with swift dispatch at that.

Hence the haste in this instance was not unusual, but the exact detail was a little out of the common.

Diamond Dick, Jr., realized that he was going to have no fair show for his life, and he maintained that sullen silence that spoke of a stout heart, as if he believed that something would slip in his favor before the final moment came.

Just then there was no appearance of any such unfortunate event as that coming to pass.

The moment he had been placed on the steer's back the beast became more furious than ever, and it was more than the men could do to manage it and keep their prisoner on its back at the same time.

"Free my hands," Bertie called out to them, "and then I can do my share of hanging on."

"That's so, boys," called out Gib Dillon. "Free his hands."

"And have him shoot more of us, cuss him!"

"You know his guns are empty; what ye 'fraid of?"

They had forgotten that point, it seemed, and one of their number freed the prisoner's hands immediately with one slash of his knife.

Thus freed, Bertie leaned forward and caught hold of the horns up close to the mad brute's head.

The crowd pushed and prodded the steer along toward the place of execution, the whole populace, seemingly, following in procession, whooping and yelling.

The place indicated was at the head of the gulch.

Here was an old mine shaft, and overhead was a big beam that projected over the trail a considerable distance.

Under this the steer was brought to a standstill, now nearly a dozen men clinging to it at every point where it was possible to gather up a handful to hold on by.

"Now, prisoner, what have ye got to say fer yerself?" called out the boss of the town.

"I want to say that you are a gang of ruffians, the whole lot of you," cried Bertie, "and if I had been able to kill a few more of you it would have been a blessing."

"Et would, hey?"

"Yes, it would. You have no proof that I stole that horse, save the word of one man, and I give you my word that I did not do it. Now, if you are inclined to be square at all, you would give me a fair trial and find out which of us tells the truth."

"Oh-ho! That is the way you look at et?"

"Yes, and that is the way any honest man would look at it, too."

"But we know the Duke of Pokeropolis, and we don't know you."

"Then give me time to prove up so that you will know me."

"Isn't there something fair about that?" asked Fancy Fan of the Duke of Pokeropolis.

They had followed the crowd to the place picked out for the hanging, and were standing a little distance back from the spot.

"He is only talking to get a chance to escape, that is all," said the Duke. "He is a bad one, well known to me, and the world will be well rid of him. They will swing him in a minute."



"Give you a chance to prove up, hey? Boys, jist pitch the end of that riata over the limb and make it fast to the bull's tail. You want a chance to git a lot of lies together, I opine. We will hang ye first, and be sure of ye, and then 'tend to yer trial afterwards."

At that there was a loud burst of laughter.

They had as little sympathy for him as they would have expressed for a man pitted against a bull in a fight.

A third of the crowd were Greasers, so-called, and another third as hard a lot of cutthroat border toughs as ever went so long unchanged. It was a bad gang.

The rope was being put over the limb.

That done, the end of it was hitched to the steer's tail, and they were ready for the novel lynching.

When the steer was let loose, and prodded with half a dozen bowies, more or less, it would dash forward with mad speed, and the man would be jerked off from its back and run up to the beam by his neck.

If the rope held, it would be an exciting sight.

The steer would be brought to its knees, the man's neck would be pressed against the beam with a force that would well-nigh cut his head off, and the crowd would have a fine laugh while one of their kind thus miserably perished.

It was heinous!

There was one heart that was evidently moved to sympathy.

This was the heart of Fancy Fan, who now drew a dainty yet businesslike gun from her belt, and called out:

"Gib Dillon!"

"Hillo!" cried the master of ceremonies.

"I think you have carried this joke about far enough now, and I want my vote counted here."

"Thunder!" grated the Duke of Pokeropolis, just behind her. "What do you mean to do here, girl?"

"I mean to put my finger in this pie, that is what."

"You had better not, I warn you."

"Yer do want yer vote counted, hey?" cried Dillon. "Wull, what do ye vote, purty one?"

"I vote for stopping this murder and giving that man a fair chance for his life. I am impressed with the idea that you have made a serious mistake here."

"I tell you there is no mistake," grated the Duke.

"That is what I want to be satisfied about. Prisoner, will you answer a question or two?"

"With pleasure, lady."

Bertie spoke in a firm, fearless tone that showed never a quaver of excitement.

"What is your name?"

"I am known as Diamond Dick, Jr."

"Diamond Dick, Jr.! Heavens! This murder must not be!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Duke. "Now I have got him on the hip, sure. His own tongue has hanged him. Diamond Dick, Jr., is a personal friend of mine, and this chap certainly is not he."

"You lie!"

So cried Bertie, defiantly.

"So I believe, too," cried the girl. "Men, cast off that rope from his neck!"

She leveled her gun as she gave the command.

There was a commotion in the crowd, and an inclination on the part of every man of them to get out of range.

"I tell you to cast off that rope!" she cried again. "Gib Dillon, I have got a bead on your heart, and I give you two seconds to obey my command. Cast off that rope!"

Dillon held the highest office in the gift of his fellow-townsmen, that of mayor, but he really stood second to the Duke of Pokeropolis, who virtually owned the town and had placed Dillon in charge to do his bidding.

Dillon now looked to him for a way out of the dilemma in which he found himself.

"Quick!" cried the handsome girl.

Dillon just then received a sigh from the Duke, and he cried out loudly:

"All hands let go!"

At the same time he tumbled back to get out of range of the weapon that was pointed at him, but its bullet found him.

Crack!

As quick as a wink the girl's nimble wrist turned to the required degree, and the bullet went crashing through Gib Dillon's head.

In the same instant all the men released the maddened steer, and, tumbling away from it in haste, the beast gave a snort and bellow and sprang forward at a run.

"Hold fast, for your life!" called out the girl in violet and yellow. "Hold to its horns and trust me, Diamond Dick, Jr.!"



"All right," cried Bertie. "Make a sure slash of it."

"You bet I will."

It was all so rapid that those around could hardly follow it with their eyes.

Much less had they time to recover from the sudden taking-off of the mayor and think of doing anything to apprehend his slayer.

As the steer dashed forward, so did Fancy Fan.

Guiding her big bay with her left hand, with her right she jerked a keen knife from the sash that girdled her splendid waist.

Just at the moment when she came to where the rope was hanging, it was jerked taut, and a slash of her knife severed it with one clean cut and the cords flew apart.

Bertie had nerved himself for the shock, and when it came it was so slight, thanks to the use of the knife, that he hardly minded it.

With lowered head and maddened bellow the steer dashed away up the gulch.

And after it went the brave girl who had given Bertie his life.

Then from the throats of the baffled crowd went up a yell and a hoarse shout for vengeance.

A few shots were fired after her, but none happened to hit either her or her horse, and the voice of the Duke of Pokeropolis rose above the din.

"Don't kill that girl!" he ordered. "The man who takes her life will have to answer to me for it! Stop your firing, I tell you!"

"But she has laid out Gib Dillon!"

"No matter, I want her alive! Do you understand? A hundred dollars to the man who will bring that girl back here alive and unharmed! A hundred more for the head of that young horse thief! Get your horses, quick!"

### CHAPTER III.

#### A LIFE HANGING BY A THREAD.

Diamond Dick, Jr., thanked his lucky stars—and the handsome young woman—for his narrow escape.

As it was, even escaping death by the rope, both he and the steer he bestrode would have been peppered full of bullets by that mob before they had gone half a dozen rods but for the fearless girl.

The fact that she was between him and the crowd

saved him; nothing else under heaven could have saved him, as he verily believed.

There was a big lump of gratefulness in his heart for her, and a desire to return the compliment, or, at any rate, to learn more about her and render hearty thanks.

But he was not out of the woods yet.

He was made to realize that most forcibly when the end of the rope that was dangling from his neck caught for an instant and almost jerked him to the ground.

Removing one hand from the hold he had on the horns of the maverick, and holding hard fast with the other, he drew his knife from his belt and ran its blade under the noose that was about his neck.

Having it safely there, he turned the edge outward and gave a slash, and the rope dropped.

"There, that is better," he said to himself. "If the other half happens to catch fast, it can do no more damage than pull this steer's tail out by the roots."

"That was well done, Diamond Dick, Jr.!"

It was the voice of the young woman, who was now close behind him, her big bay coming at a swift gallop.

"Yes, it was well done indeed," responded Bertie, "and I admire your sand, and have to thank you for my life——"

"Pshaw! I did not mean that; I meant your getting rid of that necktie the way you did."

"Oh! that was nothing."

"How far do you intend to ride?"

"Far enough to distance pursuit, if this beast holds out, and get a chance to reload my guns."

"All right, I will follow you up, and maybe I can be of further use to you. This horse is big enough to carry us both, if necessary, and, naturally, you will want to get out of this part of the country as soon as you can."

"You think I will go without my horse?"

"Then it was your own, really?"

"Of course it was!"

"But it will be all your life is worth to go back there. They will shoot you on sight!"

"Will they?"

"They surely will."

"Then I will have to be shot."

"You will not venture back there, will you?"

"Of course I will. You evidently do not know much about me, miss."



"No, I do not, that is true, though I have heard of you. You are a man I have much desired to meet."

"Well, you will have your desire gratified then, probably, when this mad race comes to a termination. I don't believe this brute will keep it up a long while."

As they were riding close together, it was possible to carry on this brief conversation, though by no means comfortable to do so on Bertie's part.

The gulch had taken an upward slope, and the steer was beginning to labor hard.

Bertie decided that he would now slip from its back at the first favorable opportunity.

While he was waiting for that opportunity, the nature of the gulch took a wonderful, and, under the circumstances, terrible change.

The steer ran out upon a shelf or ledge of rock that overhung a seemingly bottomless abyss, while on the other hand was an ascent so sheer that it was like a made wall.

Cool as he was, a gasp of horror escaped Diamond Dick, Jr.

Just ahead was a place so narrow that it meant certain death if the steer attempted to cross it.

Bertie let go the horns immediately, and shifted himself rapidly back to the animal's rump, with the intention of dropping off behind, but before he could carry out his intention the steer was upon the very narrowest part of the ledge.

It was now walking.

Bertie did not dare let go, for the slightest tumble would precipitate him to his death in the depths below.

He thought quickly, and he believed that it would be better for him to trust his life to the instinct that would lead the steer to use its best efforts for the preservation of its own.

He chose wisely.

The steer passed the narrow point in safety, and the moment the ledge broadened Bertie dropped off.

This was right at the end of a broader plateau, and, with a bellow, the steer turned and charged back at him with lowered head, and Bertie believed that his end was at hand.

He jerked out a gun from his belt, by force of habit, but in the same instant he recollected that it was empty.

He had no opportunity to reload his weapons.

The steer was fairly upon him, and one of his horns was aimed straight at his middle.

Acting instinctively, Bertie fell back, and a niche in the wall of rock received him just as the hideous horn swept past within an inch of his abdomen.

"Whew!" Bertie whistled. "That was a close shave. Now I will fix you, my fine maverick—But, my God! it means the death of that lovely girl!"

With mad haste he proceeded to load his empty revolver, and only one chamber at that.

A life hung on a second, perhaps.

And yet, quick as he was, he heard a wild, piercing scream before his object was accomplished.

The steer was standing again on the narrowest part of the trail, at a point where a sharp bend made the ledge appear to terminate in empty air.

There, with lowered head, it was bellowing loudly, at the same time trembling with fear, and, worst of all, it was blocking the way between Bertie and the brave girl who had saved his life.

Her scream for help was heard again in the very brief time that elapsed while Bertie was loading that one chamber of his revolver.

He could not see her, owing to the bend of the trail.

What was the matter?

Let us return to her and learn what had taken place.

Following closely after Bertie, she had been as surprised as he at the sudden change in the nature of their surroundings.

She drew rein before her horse entered upon the narrow part of the ledge, and, slipping out of the saddle, led her horse forward by its bridle to give assistance if possible.

She expected to hear both the steer and its rider go tumbling into the abyss at any moment.

On one hand rose the immense wall of solid rock, towering upward for hundreds of feet, and on the other was the frightful gorge that would mean her grave if she lost her footing there.

Her horse held back with fear, yet she did not dare let go the rein and leave the animal to its own care.

She gently urged it forward.

She was just at the point of rock where the trail curved, but not quite far enough to see around it, when the bellow of the steer was heard as it turned and charged back upon Bertie.

She believed that it had lost its footing, and that



that was its bellow of despair as it tumbled to its death.

And what of the handsome young man?

There was no time for her to speculate, for her own life was in jeopardy immediately.

At the sound of the bellow her horse stopped short, braced its feet, bent its ears forward, and showed every evidence of greatest terror.

The girl instinctively tightened her clutch upon the rein, and lucky for her that she did so, in the light of what followed the next moment.

The steer bellowed again, now with fear, and the horse recoiled in its fright, and the dashing girl was thrown off her balance, and in the same moment was swinging between life and death, time and eternity.

In dismounting she had pulled the reins over the horse's head, and now she hung by them over the edge of the abyss, while the noble brute, with neck arched, was supporting her weight and at the same time backing in fright from danger it could not see.

In falling the girl had screamed loudly.

And now, as she hung there, she called again and again for help, yet not knowing whether help was near or not.

For aught she knew to the contrary, the handsome youth whose life she had saved was at that moment a shapeless mass at the bottom of the abyss, where, if so, she must soon join him.

Her screams seemed to frighten her horse still more, and, with an effort, she ceased them.

She needed calm nerve and cool head now, if ever.

As she looked up into the eyes of her faithful big bay, noting how firmly he stood supporting her weight, her heart went out in fond attachment for the noble animal.

Crack!

It was the sharp report of a revolver.

At the sound the big bay started and backed still further, causing the bridle reins to rasp and grate along the edge of the chasm.

Fancy Fan's heart was filled with dread.

How long would she be able to hold fast? How long would that slender strip of leather stand the strain?

Already her arms were growing numb, already her hands were burning with the strain they were undergoing, and her breathing was becoming labored. She could not hold on much longer.

"Help! For God's sake, help!"

"Yes, I will be there in a second."

Crack.

Again the weapon.

This time the bellow was more like a groan.

There was a fall, then a hollow sound going down and down into the dark gorge.

Still further the horse was backing, almost terrorized, the reins were scraping dangerously along the edge of the ledge, and the girl's brain was beginning to reel.

Would Bertie reach her in time?

His first shot, on getting his revolver loaded, had not killed the steer.

With mad haste he proceeded to load again, but he was not half so cool as he would have been in a hot fight under the fire of an enemy.

Those screams, the cause of which was unknown to him, had unnerved him as nothing else had done.

He dropped one cartridge, there was a little delay in getting another, but at last he was ready for another shot.

Really, but a few seconds had elapsed.

Seeing the necessity for a steady aim, he brought his nerve under subjection to his will instantly, and when he leveled the weapon there was not a tremor of a muscle.

He took quick but accurate aim behind one of the ears and fired.

With a moan the beast fell headlong into the gorge.

Bertie ran forward then, as swiftly as the dangerous footing would admit, and what he saw almost chilled his blood for the instant.

He took it all in at one swift glance—the narrow ledge, the terrible height above it, the frightful depth on the other hand, and there, swinging by the bridle of her horse, the handsome girl!

Her eyes were partly closed. She opened them and cast an appealing look at him, then closed them fully.

Bertie had not stopped, but was moving toward her.

"Hold fast!" he said, in a tone of assurance. "Hold fast and I will save you, or give my own life in trying!"

Speaking kindly to the horse, he took hold of the reins with gentle hand, for the slightest jerk would send that life into the unknown, but the horse seemed to know what was required.



It stood like an equine statue, while Bertie's hand moved slowly yet steadily down the reins, and at the same time he was whispering words of assurance to the girl whose life was hanging, at it were, by a thread. With great firmness his strong hand seized a wrist, and she was saved!

Once he had hold upon her wrist, Bertie's splendid strength came into play, and he quickly drew her to safety upon the ledge, where, the strain relaxed, she swooned.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE DIAMOND CLEW—A PLEDGE REQUIRED.

Diamond Dick, Jr., looked down upon the fair, lovely face with a feeling akin to fascination.

The exquisite features, delicately curved, the fine brows, the splendid forehead, the pearly teeth just visible between the slightly-parted lips.

But in the same moment he gave a great start.

He almost allowed the lovely form to drop from his embrace to the hard rock floor.

Something had caught his eyes, something chained his attention, something caused his eyes to dilate as with horror as he looked upon that superb personification of the "sleeping beauty."

What was it?

"My God!" he gasped; "the diamond clew!"

His eyes were fixed upon the point where her jacket was unbuttoned.

There, upon a tie that was carelessly knotted, was a pin of flashing diamonds, none of them large, but all of the purest water.

But the pin was not perfect.

It was in the form of a cross, but the end of one of the arms was wanting.

The young woman did not appear to be on the point of an immediate return to consciousness, and Bertie laid her gently down.

"Great Heavens!" he said, as he rose to his feet, and he passed his hand over his brow, as if to clear his thoughts. "Can it be possible that this is the murderess—that the trail ends here?"

His face paled at the thought.

When alone, Bertie sometimes allowed his emotions to have sway.

At other times, when he so willed it, his face was as impenetrable as a mask of marble.

"Can it be?" he repeated. "Can it be that this is

the slayer of Anita Manaton, whom I have undertaken to run down for the crime—against whom my word has been pledged?"

The thought staggered him.

"And she has saved my life," he said to himself. "And I have saved hers—for what? To hand her over to the authorities? God forbid!"

Bertie thrust his hand into the inner pocket of his vest.

When he drew it forth, he had in his fingers a tiny white packet, and this he carefully opened.

The moment the light touched its contents it was reflected with many a flash and sparkle, for it fell upon other diamonds.

Taking these from the paper, for they were set in a setting of unique pattern, he knelt beside the unconscious girl and held these stones close to the broken cross.

"The same!" he almost cried aloud. "And I am pledged to hand her over to justice!"

He rose, and there was a suspicion of moisture in his fine eyes.

At that moment the young woman began to show signs of recovering her senses, and Bertie hurriedly folded up his diamond clew in the paper and returned it to his pocket.

That done, he stooped and thrust the tie, which he had disarranged in his excitement, back to its proper position, and began chafing the girl's hands to hasten her recovery.

She presently opened her eyes.

Bertie's head was hanging over her, and their eyes met, and they seemed to be looking into each other's soul.

Could eyes so deep, so pure, so limpid, conceal the secret of a murder?

That was Bertie's thought.

And he answered it—no.

But the clew?

For the moment he banished it from mind as far as possible, and gave the little hands a firm pressure in his own.

"Where am I?" the girl asked, looking all around her.

Then the sight of her horse, the towering wall of rock, the vision of arching skill above it, all served to bring back to her mind what had taken place.

She shuddered.

"You remember?" asked Bertie.



"Yes, yes; I remember now. Great Heavens! it was terrible?"

"And it might have been more terrible still if I had been half a minute longer reaching you."

"Yes; now I recall your voice; you told me to hold fast for life; I made a last desperate effort to do so; I saw your face above me, and that is the last I can recall."

"You must have fainted just as I seized your arm."

"I do not remember your touching me; I remember only seeing your eyes looking into mine."

"You must have suffered horrible mental anguish in those few minutes, to say nothing of the physical strain?"

"Yes, yes; I did—I did. Strange thoughts and pictures filled my brain, faces of loved ones came and whispered to me, and one in particular— Ah! thank God I live!"

"What of that one?"

"Do not ask me that—at any rate, not now. There came the sound of heavenly music, bright lights danced before my eyes, and just then I thought I heard my name spoken—it must have been you."

"No doubt."

"Then I just saw your face, so full of alarm for me, and—and—you know the rest."

"Yes, I know the rest."

"And how long have I been unconscious?"

"Several minutes."

Bertie had again lifted her head and shoulders, and was holding her on his knee with one arm supporting her.

The color was beginning to return to her lips and cheeks.

"Please assist me to rise; I feel better now," she said.

He did not hesitate, but lifted her to her feet, still lending her some support.

It was well that he did so, for she staggered at first, and he aided her away from the edge of the precipice and let her lean against the wall.

"Thank you," she said. "I owe my life to you; I can never repay the obligation."

"You must not put it that way," said Bertie.

"Why not?"

"Did I not owe my life to you before? I have merely paid back the great debt I owed you."

"You might have escaped in some other way."

"Yes, by a miracle, for instance, but such things seldom happen in these days."

"Well, I am glad you are willing to consider the debt as partly canceled, for my life is worth more to me than the mere pleasure of existing. It is more to me now than it was before."

Bertie wondered what she was hinting at.

He resolved to draw her out, and went about it in a way that came to him on the spur of the moment.

"And who is the highly favored man?" he asked, with interest.

Her face flushed.

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"Do you not say that life is more to you now than it was before?"

"Yes; but——"

"And am I to blame if I infer that there is an accepted lover in the background?"

Her cheeks were now aflame, as Bertie bent his own handsome eyes upon her own.

"You do not understand," was all she said.

"And how can I, unless you tell me?" he asked.

"You are wrong in what you suggest, let that suffice."

She turned to her horse and motioned to it.

The faithful animal came forward cautiously on the narrow place, and pressed its nose against her hand.

"Good Bruno!" she cried, caressing the beast. "You helped save my life; I owe you more affection than ever now."

"You almost make me envy your——"

Bertie was going to say horse, but yet again the thought of that broken diamond cross flashed into his mind.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the girl, turning quickly and holding out both her hands to him. "It was you saved my life, really; the horse could not have done it. I crave your pardon."

Bertie took the hands; he could not have resisted taking them.

"You will forgive me?" she asked.

"If there is anything to be forgiven."

"My show of affection for my horse, saying that it had saved my life when it was you—you!"

Her hands closed upon his for the moment, and she spoke with warm fervor.

"If that is all, you are forgiven, and I am more



than repaid," said Bertie, giving the firm little hands one return press and letting them go.

Instantly he saw a shade of disappointment in her eyes.

"Well, what is next on the programme?" she asked, drawing herself away with reserve and speaking in a tone that discarded sentiment.

"The next thing on the programme?"

"That was what I said."

"Well, for you I cannot speak, not knowing anything about your programme; but if I can be of service to you, you have only to command me."

"Thank you. I may call on you for some assistance in the near future; I will remember your promise. My present intention is to return to that town of Pokeropolis——"

"You will return there?"

"Yes! I must. My business is there, for the present."

"But you killed the fellow they called Gib Dillon. They may make it interesting for you if you return."

"Can't help it; there is where I am going. And you?"

"My intention is the same. They have got a horse there that belongs to me, and I don't propose to yield claim to it."

"But they will hang you, sir! You will get no show whatever, if you return there. How many men did I see lying around dead when I arrived upon the scene?"

"I guess there were half a dozen of them, dead and hard hit together."

"And you would dare to return there in the face of that?"

"I fought them single-handed—my hand against the whole shooting-match, and it was a fair scrimmage."

"That will count for nothing with the wild horde of that camp, and they will be more than ever determined to put you out of the way. Pray do not return."

"Do not return? What difference can it make to you?"

"You saved my life, and I would not want to see you lose yours in so foolhardy a manner."

"But I have business there, besides my interest in recovering my horse. I have business with the man you have mentioned—the Duke of Pokeropolis."

"You mean that you are his foe?"

"We did not act like affectionate twins to each other, did we?"

"And you would, perhaps, seek his life! There is a promise I would exact from you, sir."

"What is it?"

"You gave me credit for saving your life; maybe I did; I leave it for you to say. You certainly saved mine, and so are under no obligation. But, still, there is a promise I would exact——"

"What is it?"

"That you will spare the life of the Duke of Pokeropolis."

Bertie started.

What could this mean.

"What is he to you?" he demanded.

"No matter now; will you spare his life? I know not what your quarrel with him may be, but I beg, implore, do not kill him!"

"But you have seen that he is determined to kill me, and self-defense is the first law of nature. My friends might infer that I had softening of the brain if I allowed him to steal a march on me."

"But you can avoid him; you can keep out of his way. You said if you could be of service to me in any manner, and I am taking you at your word. I beg of you again," stepping forward and laying her hands on his shoulders and looking straight into his eyes, "spare that man's life."

## CHAPTER V.

### DEFENDED, YET THREATENED.

Diamond Dick, Jr., was nonplused.

He was in a deep quandary, and knew not what move to make next in the game.

It would be impossible for him to give the pledge demanded, and it was almost as impossible to resist the pleadings of this handsome girl.

While he could not promise, yet he must know more about her—must know the reason why she begged for the life of the Duke of Pokeropolis. Was it that she loved him?

He could not believe that.

That would be to discredit what she had said respecting her affections.

The response she had made to his insinuation respecting a lover had led him to infer that she was "heart whole and fancy free."

But what meant this?



These thoughts and many more flashed through his brain while he was returning her gaze.

There was something in her eyes that drew him, and which at the same time repelled him, now that he seemed to look deeper into their limpid depths than before. Back of the fond exterior appeared to shine forth a venom that was ready to poison any victim whom its possessor might elect to strike.

"You do not answer me," she said, after some moments of silence on the part of both.

"You ask me an almost impossible thing," said Bertie. "You ask me to spare the life of one who, as you have seen, thirsts for my own."

"You can avoid him. For my sake you can forget him."

"The inducement is great, certainly," said Bertie, gallantly, "yet where would my reward come in?"

A slight flush came again to her cheeks.

"Would not the fact that you have done a favor for one of my sex be reward sufficient?" she asked him.

"Well, hardly," he responded, with a smile. "However, if I agree to spare the life of the Duke of Pokeropolis—and I have spared it once already, for I could have picked him off easily during the *mêlée* I had with him and his crew there at Pokeropolis—if I agree to spare his life, will you grant me a small favor in return?"

"What is it?"

"The thing you ask seems great, while what I ask is not impossible. It is this: Give me the diamond cross you wear on your tie there."

Instantly her hands fell from his shoulders.

She leaped back with a suppressed cry, and her face turned as pale as death.

Bertie looked at her in amazement.

Before another word could be spoken by either, another voice broke in upon the momentary silence.

"Let me chip in right here, if you please."

Instantly both turned to look, Bertie's hands falling upon his guns, which, as he recollected instantly, were empty.

They faced the Duke of Pokeropolis!

There he stood, just behind Fancy Fan's horse, with a gun leveled over the animal's flank straight at Diamond Dick, Jr.

"Take your hands away from your guns," he said, in a stern tone, "and if you want to say a prayer, say

it mighty quick. Your little race has been run to its end."

Fancy Fan stood as if petrified.

Her face was white with alarm, and she seemed to know not what action to take.

Bertie saw that he was in a desperate situation, and he regretted the fact that his weapons were not loaded—that he had neglected loading them.

But then the thrilling events through which he had just passed, and the after talk with this handsome girl—his mind had not had time to revert to other things.

"You would not kill him?" suddenly cried Fancy Fan.

Her hand fell in the direction of her belt.

"Steady!" cried the Duke of Pokeropolis. "I can turn this gun upon you before you can begin to draw on me, my girl. I have nothing against you, and would spare you; but this dog—he dies!"

"You will give me a minute to prepare?"

So asked Bertie.

"Make it mighty short."

"I would say something privately to this young lady——"

"Not a word, not a syllable, curse you! At the end of sixty pulsebeats I pull this trigger."

There could be no doubting that he meant it.

Fancy Fan took action now promptly.

She had had time to study the dilemma briefly.

With a bound she placed herself directly in front of Diamond Dick, Jr.

"Hold!" she cried. "Your bullet can only reach him through my body, Duke of Pokeropolis!"

"Curse you! get out of my range!"

"Not an inch. Fire, if you want to."

Bertie's hands now dropped to his guns, empty though he knew them to be.

He believed that the Duke of Pokeropolis desired to spare this girl; in fact, what he had said was proof of it.

"Steady!" cried the Duke. "By heavens, if you draw a gun, I will bore you right through her heart! Her life depends on your action, so go slow in what you do."

Other men were now appearing on the ledge behind the Duke of Pokeropolis.

They had come out evidently to learn the fate of the man on the steer, and the dashing young woman who had aided him in making his escape.



"My hands are up," said Bertie, promptly.

He believed that the man meant what he said, and that he would shoot, since it would be a shot for his life.

He could not know that Bertie's guns were empty.

"And now, young woman, you step from in front of him for just the fraction of a second, and I will cash his chips for him and send him on his long journey."

"I tell you that your bullet can reach him only through my body," she declared again.

"Fool, will you throw your life away?"

"Yes, if need be!"

Bertie admired such courage as that; it thrilled him.

Fortunate for the Duke of Pokeropolis that his guns were not loaded, or a sudden snap would have ended his career.

"Recede, recede around that bend," the girl whispered.

Bertie started to do so at once, for once there he would have a chance to reload his revolvers.

"Curse you! what are you about?" cried the Duke of Pokeropolis.

"We are about getting out of your range, Albert Cleary," said the girl, in her firm tone.

At mention of this name the Duke gave a start.

"Stop!" he thundered.

"You have it in your power to stop us with your revolver," she calmly replied.

"Stop! or I fire!"

"Very well—fire, if you please."

And he did fire.

The bullet sped uncomfortably close.

Bertie noted that the brave girl did not flinch, and he believed also that the Duke of Pokeropolis had not fired to hit.

If, however, he got a sight at him, it would be different, if there was the ghost of a chance of hitting him without harming the girl who was so bravely defending him.

"If my guns were only loaded!" Bertie muttered.

"I thank God they are not!" was the fervent ejaculation he heard in response.

"Will you stop?" thundered the Duke.

"Yes, when we get out of range, or before, if you stop us," said the girl.

Another shot.

The bullet chipped a piece out of the brim of Fancy Fan's white sombrero.

Still she did not flinch, but pressed Bertie steadily back toward the bend, which was now at hand almost.

It was gall and wormwood for a chap of Bertie's spirit to be thus defenseless and under the protection of one so fair and lovely as this brave young woman.

To her he owed his life again!

"Curse you! I will stop you!"

Again the Duke fired, but whether he fired to hit and missed, or whether it was another bluff to scare, did not matter. The bullet missed.

Before he could fire again they had turned the point of rock.

Bertie jerked his guns from his belt instantly, and prepared to load, but something cold was pressed under his ear.

With a start he looked up.

Fancy Fan was facing him with a revolver in her hand, and its tube was what he felt.

"Don't do it," she gave warning, in calm tone. "You owe your life to me again; now I protect the life of the Duke of Pokeropolis!"

Bertie was dumfounded.

"At least let me warn him to stay where he is," he said.

"Yes, do that, for I want a parting word with you."

So Bertie called out:

"Now, Duke of Pokeropolis, show your head around this bend if you dare! A bullet will find it as soon as it comes in sight. I give you fair warning."

Muttered curses were the response to that.

"Now, what we say must be said quickly," said Fancy Fan, still covering Bertie with her gun. "I want your pledge that you will not kill the Duke of Pokeropolis."

"And you would force it from me at the point of a revolver?"

She hesitated a second.

The next she removed the weapon from his ear and thrust it into her belt with determination.

"No," she said, earnestly. "I ask it as a favor, a favor for what I have done for you. Upon your answer depends my happiness."

"I cannot understand you," said Bertie.

"No, you cannot, nor will you. Be quick; they are urging my horse forward; the situation will soon



be as before; you are risking not only your life, but mine!"

What she said was true.

There was no time for dallying.

"I promise—I promise on one condition," he said, quickly.

"The condition?"

"The cross."

Again the blood receded from her face.

"No, no; my God, no!" she cried. "Anything but that. Do you not hear them? You have scant time to get out of range! Promise me, and go—go! I will hold the turn until you are out of their sight."

"Stop!" shouted Bertie, loudly. "The first living thing that appears in sight dies! No, Fancy Fan, the cross—the cross at once!"

"My God! can my suspicion be true?" as she whipped her gun from her belt again, but thrust it back spitefully. "No, I will not do that," she cried, under her breath. "Your pledge, on your word of honor," she demanded, looking full in his face. "Your pledge that you will spare the life of Albert Cleary—the Duke of Pokeropolis, or, as God hears me, I will no longer defend you, but let him take your life! Your answer, quick! What is it?"

## CHAPTER VI.

### ONE PLEDGE GIVEN—ANOTHER REFUSED.

Diamond Dick, Jr., was left no choice.

He could not but believe that the girl meant what she said.

That she would further risk her life for him was not at all within the range of probability.

Nor would he have her do so.

His duty was plain, every other consideration aside; he ought to relieve her of his hazardous presence.

"I will spare him," he said.

"You swear that you will not take his life if chance offers?"

"I swear that I will not take the life of the Duke of Pokeropolis; or Albert Cleary, as you have named him."

"That is enough," she said. "I know that I can rely upon your word. In return, I will do my best to protect your life against him. And now good-by; get out of range as speedily as you can!"

"One more word of warning to check their advance."

"Be quick about it."

Bertie shouted:

"Fair warning! The first head that shows around that corner gets a billet of lead for ballast!"

And then to Fancy Fan:

"You are an enigma to me, young lady, but you are one that I intend to solve before this game ends. I am under great obligations to you; perhaps I may yet be able to discharge the debt."

"Go, go! Waste no more time in talk!"

"But your own safety? Will you not let me protect you further? Will you not come with me?"

"No, no, no! I need no protection; I can protect myself, once you are out of the way. Do you know that every moment you linger here you just so much further endanger me?"

"Well, I go, but we shall meet again."

"And Heaven grant that it may not be as I fear— No, no! Do not stop! Go on, go on!"

So pressingly urged, there was nothing Bertie could do but obey.

He knew that his hand was played out; that he could hope to win nothing without a new cut and deal.

Without further word or leave, he ran swiftly along the ledge trail in the direction of another bend, and Fancy Fan watched him until he had passed out of sight.

She drew a breath of relief.

"Thank God, he is safe!" she said to herself. "I wonder— But, why speculate? Time alone can prove it. At any rate, I have his pledge."

A sound drew her attention.

Her noble bay horse was just coming around the corner, all a-tremble for its safety.

She held out her hand, and it gave a glad whinny.

"Well, why don't you shoot it?" demanded the voice of the Duke of Pokeropolis.

"Because it is an innocent brute," was the reply Fancy Fan made. "We are more merciful than you, Duke of Pokeropolis."

"Ha! he has gone, eh?"

"Who has gone?"

"That cuss who was with you—whose life you saved."

"I have not said that he has gone. You had bet-



ter be wary about putting your head out for a target."

"Fooled, by thunder!"

The Duke of Pokeropolis sprang out into sight from behind the horse, at the moment of its passing the point of rock.

He had a revolver in each hand, and there was a look of rage on his face.

"How are you fooled?" asked the vision of loveliness that confronted him.

Fancy Fan had her sweetest smile for him.

"By not finding that hound here," was the response.

"Did you suppose that he would be fool enough to stay here?"

"He would not have got away but for you. What business had you to interfere?"

"Well, he saved my life, and I should have been an ingrate not to do him a favor in return. What are you going to do with me?"

"With you?"

"Exactly."

"Well, you are guilty of the murder of our recent mayor, Gib Dillon, and——"

"And what?"

"The citizens may want to hold you to answer for the crime."

"Ha, ha! Why, man, he committed suicide; plain case; can prove it by any fair-minded man who saw it all."

"Suicide? Are you crazy?"

"Well, I hope not."

"It was you who shot him."

"And it was suicide for him not to take the warning I gave him. He had fair warning what would happen."

"Yes, that's so," muttered some of the Duke's followers.

"And so the question is, what are you going to do with me?" the girl still insisted.

"What do you think had orter be done with ye?" demanded one of the Duke's men.

"You had ought to forgive me and escort me back to your camp."

"Do you surrender to us?" demanded the Duke of Pokeropolis.

"Yes, on one condition."

"What is it?"

"That you don't call it a crime, my dropping that

man. It was in a game where it was his life or the other fellow's, you see."

"And what was that other fellow to you?"

"Nothing."

"That is too thin. You would not have chipped in on his side as you did, otherwise."

"I am telling you the truth."

"And you expect me to believe it?"

"Certainly; I never saw him before in my life."

"Well, now, that is a pretty big dose to swallow. What did you chip in on his side for?"

"Because you were all against him, and because I believed—and, for that matter, believe still—that some mistake was made."

"Great Scott! don't you suppose we knew what we were about?"

"Was there no room for a mistake?"

"None whatever. The horse and the man disappeared at the same time, and here he comes into this camp of Pokeropolis as big as life, astride of my own animal. What would you think, under the circumstances?"

"Well, admitting that I was possibly wrong, I thought I was right; and that brings us back to the question: What are you going to do about it?"

"Will you surrender to us?"

"No, sir."

"Then what will you do about it?"

"If you press me, I can leap into this gorge and defy you all."

"You would not do that!"

"Don't make it necessary, and I won't."

"Well, on what conditions will you give in and accompany us back to our camp?"

"On these conditions: That you allow me to lead my horse forward to a wider place and turn him and mount; that you all precede me back to the camp; that you leave me free and armed, and will not hold me accountable for what has happened; that you, Duke of Pokeropolis, give me your friendship, and pledge your word not to harm that young man, if he should fall again into your hands——"

"Stop! that is about far enough. You seem to want the earth and all that is therein."

"Well, I have not asked for the sky, at any rate," with a winning smile.

"The wonder is that you did not want that, too. Now, let's see, here are five distinct things you have



demanded—to lump some of the minor points and include them.”

“And what do you say?”

“I will grant them all but one.”

“Which one?”

“The last.”

“Then you will not let him alone?”

“Not by a mighty sight! No horse thief goes unhung here if we know it, eh, boys?”

“That’s right!” shouted his followers.

“And are you willing, boys, not to hold her for Gib Dillon’s taking off?”

He gave them a sly wink as he put the question.

“Yes, let et go,” said one, who appeared to speak for his fellows. “Gib had fair warnin’ what would happen; nobody kin deny that.”

“Very well; you have heard the verdict,” said the Duke.

“And on those conditions I will go back with you to your town. I will turn my horse and join you immediately. Come, Bruno!”

The faithful bay followed her, and at some distance farther along the ledge a place where he could turn was reached, and there the animal was headed the other way.

Fancy Fan did not mount, however.

She considered the risks too great, and neither did she hold the rein as before, lest she might again be thrown off her balance by the stopping of the horse.

“Well, you are as good as your word, so far,” said the Duke of Pokeropolis, when she rejoined him.

“And I expect you to be as good as yours,” she responded. “You have pledged me your word that you will be my friend, and now I want you to prove it to me.”

“And what is to be my reward?” he demanded.

“You have been repaid already.”

“Repaid?”

“Yes. But I will further agree to give you my friendship, if you deserve it.”

“Then I am assured on that point—I shall have your friendship. But what did you mean when you said I had already been paid?”

“I have just saved your life.”

“Saved my life?”

“Yes.”

“How?”

“That young man would have picked you off from around the point of rock, only for me.”

“He would, eh? Well, I am willing to let you think that you have done me a service, miss, but the fact remains that it was a game that two could have played at, and he might possibly have gotten the worst of it.”

“Well, if you will not look at that from my point of view, I have done you still another good turn.”

“He has promised not to kill you if chance offers.”

“Well, really, I don’t see why he should; but if you

are trying to work the same pledge from me in his behalf, you need not go any further. It won’t be granted. If he falls again into our hands it will mean his death!”

The girl shuddered and turned her eyes to the ground for the space of a moment.

“Well, at any rate, you cannot deny that I have served you a good turn,” she said, “and the time may come when I will want a good turn in payment.”

“Then you have only to ask it,” said the Duke of Pokeropolis.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE LITTLE THUNDERBOLT IN ACTION.

Diamond Dick, Jr., as soon as he had rounded the next bend, stopped to load his guns.

It would not do for him to be caught in a similar plight again, he argued, although in the instance just past there had been ample excuse.

“Now,” he said, with something of satisfaction, as he thrust his peerless poppers into their holsters fully loaded and ready for the next occasion for their use, “that’s better.”

That done, he looked cautiously back in the direction he had come.

He saw what took place until Fancy Fan turned her horse and followed the Duke of Pokeropolis, as described.

“That is a queer girl,” said Bertie to himself. “I must know more about her. I cannot believe that she is the murderess, and yet what is she doing with that diamond cross?”

He was puzzled.

“Well, there is one way to find out,” he decided, after further reflection; “I must go again to Pokeropolis and ascertain. But there I shall now be at a serious disadvantage, having pledged my word not to kill the duke of the burg.”

He was undecided whether to press on and eventually find some other way leading back to Pokeropolis, or return the way he had come.

He decided against the latter course.

There was too much risk of an ambush and being shot unawares, for he knew well that his life was at a premium now.

So, his mind made up, he pressed on.

Nor was he unmindful about looking around once in a while, for he had no assurance that some of the untamed denizens of Pokeropolis would not set out upon his trail.

He proceeded perhaps two miles in this manner before anything happened.

Then it happened with a vengeance.

Without the slightest warning three or four rifles suddenly peered out at him over the top of a boulder by the wayside, and a voice challenged:

“Whither now, pilgrim? Would ye mind stoppin’



to exchange ther time o' day? Stiddy! Don't sign year death warrant by bein' so foolish as to put yer paws on them 'ar guns; Lord A'mi'ty, don't do et!"

Diamond Dick, Jr., saw that he was fairly caught. "Well, I guess you are right, my friend," he cheerfully acquiesced. "Now, if you will kindly state what is wanted, I will pony up and go on my way. You have got me where it hurts, as the rat said to the trap, and I am not going to make any fuss."

"Wull, now, that is what I call sensible, anyhow."

A big head came into sight with that, a head that was remarkable for the amount of hair and whiskers it displayed.

Instantly the whole truth was revealed to Diamond Dick, Jr.,

This was a man he had seen at Pokeropolis during his very brief but most exciting sojourn there.

The deduction to be drawn was simple, and as self-evident as it was easy of guessing—these fellows had been sent out that way to intercept him, if, by any chance he escaped with his life.

But Bertie did not let on that he understood this.

"Talk lively now," he said, "for you know the maxim: 'Tempus fugit,' which, in our common vernacular, means: 'Time hustles.'"

"Well, that's jist what we are prepared ter do," said the spokesman, all their visages being now in sight. "The plain and simple fact of the matter is, you are wanted at Pokeropolis."

"Why, I have recently come from there," said Bertie, with apparent surprise.

"Yes, we know mighty well ye have, and that's the prime reason why ye are wanted back thar again. See ther p'int?"

"I am forced to take your word for the statement, sir."

"And we are forced to take you. Now, if ye have got as much sense as I give ye credit fer, ye won't raise no 'bjections, but submit like a lamb."

"You have got the best hand, so play it to suit yourselves."

"Then put up yer hands."

"And if I don't do that?"

"It is yer choice 'tween dyin' right hyer and now, or goin' back with us to Pokeropolis."

"That being the case, I desire to live as long as possible. I'll hold up my hands so, and you can come out and make me secure and you will have it all your own way."

Bertie held up his hands in the meekest manner imaginable, and the four rough fellows came out from their place of concealment behind the big boulder, two of them with their rifles still presented.

The other pair, he of the hair and whiskers and another, were prepared to secure him.

"There is only one favor I would ask," said Bertie, as they approached.

"And what is that? Spit et out darn quick."

"That you won't hurt me."

This caused them all to burst out in a loud haw-haw, and they never for a moment suspected a trick.

Bertie was standing so meekly, with his hands held up so high, and the expression of his face was so mild and innocent—they had a dead-easy thing of it, in their minds.

Suddenly, all was changed.

The "Little Thunderbolt" had no relish for being taken back to Pokeropolis a prisoner.

"Ay, what was more, he had no intention of going back there other than of his own free will, if he could help it—and he meant to help it if he could.

They approached him, laughing, and he stood as still as a statue, his hands high above his head, till those two rifles came within reach, and then a flash of chain lightning could not have been quicker.

Down came his hands, each grabbed a rifle by the muzzle, and the holders of those weapons were hurled backward on their backs as if mules had kicked them.

One of the rifles were discharged, but its bullet spent its force harmlessly in air.

And then instantly—crack! crack!

Bertie's brace of ever-faithfuls were out and in hand—and the two fellows who held the rifles were wafted over the great Divide before they knew what had happened.

No time or motion was lost.

Lightning itself could hardly have surpassed it.

Diamond Dick, Jr., held Whiskers and his remaining pard under cover, and his eyes flashed ominously.

"How will you have it?" he asked them. "Say mighty quick, or there will be further work for the recording angels!"

"Gosh all greasewood!" cried the bewhiskered fellow, and his eyes staring as if ready to bulge from their sockets. "What has happened hyer, anyhow?"

"Not as much as will, if you do not put up your hands this instant," was the grim rejoinder.

Up went their hands.

"And now let me relieve you of your guns," said Bertie, coolly. "I never like to take unnecessary risks, you see."

He stood the two men side by side, about a foot apart, and that having been done, dropped one of his guns back into his belt and proceeded to relieve them of theirs.

It was speedily accomplished.

The other two were dead, Bertie having fired to kill, knowing well that it was his life or theirs.

"Now, then, I want to know something about this matter," the victor of the fray announced.

"Ye have only to make yer wants known," said the whiskered fellow.

"What is your name, to begin with?"

"My name is Walker, surnamed the Hairv."



"And a pat name, too. Now, who sent you here on this business?"

"Ther Duke of Pokeropolis."

"I thought so. What did he hope to gain by it?"

"Nothin', fer a fact——"

"Then he will not be disappointed, will he? But go on."

"Ye see, he didn't hold that thar would be one chance in ten million of yer roundin' that cañon without tumblin' in, but in case et did turn out that ye got off ther steer's back before ye got thar, we wur to take ye hyer and bring ye back."

"Clever enough, but you see it has not worked according to his programme. Now, I want you to answer a few questions."

"All right; fire 'em in."

"And if I suspect that you are not talking straight I will send you to join your two pards."

Bertie was standing a couple of paces back from them, and there was no earthly chance for their playing the same trick upon him that he had played upon them.

"We'll talk straight enough, you bet. Scott! but you are thunder and lightnin' combined, you air!"

"I'll give you reason to think so, if you try on any dodge. Now, who was that young woman who aided me to escape and spoiled your necktie party?"

"Give et up. How should we know?"

"You had never seen her before?"

"Never."

"And you have been some time at Pokeropolis?"

"Wull, yes, quite a spell of while, sonny."

"And you never saw that girl before?"

"Never."

"Very well. Now, how long has the Duke of Pokeropolis been a shining light in the moral firmament of your community?"

"How long has he been thar?"

"Yes."

"Goin' on three years. Ye see, he kem thar and busted Gold-Button Bill, who was king of all ther Rushys at that time, so ter say; and he didn't stop at that, but kep' on till he owned nigh about all their hull darn combination."

"I have heard so. And he has been there ever since?"

"'Ceptain' spells when he ain't been thar."

"Was he there a month ago?"

"Wull, lemme see. Come to think of et, he was away about that long ago, I opine."

"You are quite sure about that, are you?"

"Yes; ain't that 'bout right, Bull?" to his companion in trouble.

"I reckon et is, Hairy," was the reply.

"Well, one thing more: Do you know what his real name is?"

"There, now yer ask me too much," said Mr. Walker. "We all took to callin' him ther Duke of

Pokeropolis, and that is the only handle I know fer him."

"Never heard anybody call him anything else?"

"No, never did."

"Very well, that is all I can get out of you, I guess. Now I am going to give you a little task to perform, and I want you to do it just as I lay it out for you. See?"

"We see thet you aire boss of ther situation, sure pop."

"Well, I want you to shoulder your dead pards here after I have relieved them of their weapons, and I want you to carry them back to Pokeropolis and lay them at the feet of your Duke, with my compliments."

"That is rough on us, pardner."

"It is your only choice, that or death——"

"Don't mention et; we'll do jist whatever you say."

"That is what I say, then. And I want you to tell him that Diamond Dick, Jr., sends his best respects, and will pay him a personal visit before many hours go over his head."

"You don't mean to say that you are comin' to Pokeropolis again?"

"That is what I do mean to say, and I want you to repeat it to your Duke. There, that is all; now shoulder your dead men and git!"

Bertie had removed the weapons from the dead men while speaking, at the same time keeping a wary eye out for the living pair, and now he stood back to give them room.

Each of the pair picked up a man, and, staggering under the burden, set their faces in the direction of Pokeropolis, there to deliver their dread offerings and repeat the message Diamond Dick, Jr., had given them for the Duke.

Bertie watched them until they had passed out of sight, when he gathered up the weapons he had taken from them, a respectable armful, and turned back in the direction whence he had come.

He had another purpose in mind now, one that meant a great personal risk.

How would he fare?

## CHAPTER VIII.

### TOASTING A PROSPECTIVE DUCHESS.

It was night in Pokeropolis. The Palace Hotel was doing a big business, and things were humming.

The exciting events of the day had awakened the populace to the fact that they were living in times of sensations.

There had been the advent of the youth on the black horse, the claim made by the Duke of Pokeropolis that the horse was his property, and the subsequent attempt at a lynching.

Then the arrival of the dashing and handsome girl in violet and yellow, her defense of the prisoner, his



escape, the exciting events on the cañon cliff trail—all together, there was food enough for gossip and lots to spare besides.

But the daring youth, where was he?

The four who had been sent to intercept him had not yet reported, and it began to look as if something had happened.

The scene in the main room of the Palace scarcely needs description. It was the usual conglomeration of miner and siren, cowboy and sport, Greaser and half-breed, always to be found in such resorts of a night in the Southwest.

One character was missing.

It was the Duke of Pokeropolis, and one man presently raised the question:

"Whar's ther Duke to-night?"

"Oh," said another, "he's hit hard with ther beauty of that dazzler what kem hyer this afternoon, and he can't tear himself away from her."

"Wull, I don't blame him fer that," declared the first speaker. "She is a dazzler, fer a fact. What do ye say to drinkin' to ther health of ther Duchess of Pokeropolis?"

"Who is she?" cried still another.

"Why, ther bute, of course; don't ye s'pose ther Duke means biz?"

"Mebby he does, but mebbly ther bute won't have et so. Takes two to make a bargain of that kind, ye know."

"That's so, but who says a drink to ther duchess, anyhow?"

There was a general whoop for that.

There was a rush for the bar likewise, where the bartender stood waiting for some one to give the word.

"Whose order-up is this?" he called out.

His glance ran over the faces of those ranged before the bar, and they in turn looked at one another.

"Whur is he?" one sang out. "Whur is Long John? He is ther galoot what invited us up hyer. Come, Long John, give ther word, and let ther nectar flow."

"Durn et!" exclaimed that individual, "I didn't ask ye up ter swill, did I? I leave et to any man hyer ef I did, now. I said what's ther matter with drinkin' ther health of ther duchess?"

"Wull, what did that mean but a treat?"

"What did et mean? Why, et meant that every galoot hyer was free to waltz up and honor ther toast ef he wanted to——"

"That's jist what I said, and hyer we be, big as life, and as dry as a patch of ther Great Sahara! Come, give ther word, and let ther juice of ther gay an' festive tarrantler percolate!"

"Ef he wanted to honor et at his own expense," Long John finished.

"Oh, you be darn!"

"Take him out an' hang him!"

"Wipe up ther floor with him fer a mop!"

"Smash him through a winder!"

"Tie him to a mule!"

The disgusted throng was thus giving vent to its spleen when into the room came the Duke of Pokeropolis.

Easy, handsome, well dressed, he looked the pink of perfect manhood as he sauntered gracefully into the room, and the excitement around the bar claimed his notice.

"What is the matter here?" he asked.

"What is ther matter?" was the howl. "A whole lot is ther matter, Duke. Long John 'vited us up hyer——"

"Didn't do no sech thing!" piped up Long John.

"Wull, anyhow, he p'posed a toast to ther Duchess of Pokeropolis, and when we took ther trouble to brace up ther bar he backed down, and said et was every galoot fer himself."

"That's right, that's straight," approved Long John. "That was jist what I meant. Ye see, Duke, I had no sooner got half of et out than this hyer durn drove of cattle stampeded fer ther shelf, and took fer granted that I was goin' to blow in a month's wages on 'em. Nary, I reckon!"

A part of the crowd in the room broke out in a laugh at the expense of the other part.

The Duke of Pokeropolis looked serious.

"What did you mean by a toast to the Duchess of Pokeropolis?" he demanded, advancing toward Long John.

Was there going to be trouble?

They evidently thought so, for silence fell, and some sneaked toward the doors.

"Wh-wh-what did I mean?" gasped Long John.

"Yes, what did you mean? Who is the Duchess of Pokeropolis?"

"Wull, now, ye see, Duke, et was like this hyer: We missed you, and raised ther question as ter whar ye was, and somebody said ye wur payin' court to ther dazzler what kem hyer this afternoon, and she is a dazzler fer fair! And I made up my mind that you an' her would make a mighty good match, and I p'posed ther health of ther Duchess of Pokeropolis, the which same is her!"

The Duke looked relieved.

"And then you didn't stand the treat?"

"I didn't say nothin' 'bout no treat; I meant every galoot fer himself in the racket."

"And now you see how badly the boys feel about it. You should be more careful how you tamper with the feelings of the citizens of Pokeropolis."

There was a breath of relief instantly.

It was plain that the Duke did not mean to take umbrage at what had passed.

"Hooroar!" one man ventured to shout.

"Three cheers fer the Duke of Pokeropolis!"



"And three more and a hull nest of tigers fer ther duchess!"

They were given with a volume of sound that fairly made the windows dance.

"Thank you, boys," said the Duke, as soon as he could be heard. "I see you anticipate my good intention with respect to Fancy Fan, and I will not see you disappointed. Jim, set 'em up for the house."

"Hooroar! What did I tell yer?" cried Long John, and with a long jump he was about the first man at the bar. "Ain't I a prophet?" he demanded. "I'm a seer from Seerville, you bet!"

For a little while there was great excitement in the room, in a mild way, and while it was going on the Duke of Pokeropolis went farther down the room and took a seat at a table.

Another man joined him almost immediately.

"How do, Givins?" the Duke greeted him.

"My congratulations, Duke," said the other, offering his hand over the table. "I admire your taste."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, the pretty stranger, of course. You must have struck her plum center, to have won her so soon."

"Oh, the girl?"

"Of course."

The Duke had taken the proffered hand, and now the other man took a seat on the opposite side of the table.

"Well, the fact of the business is," said the Duke, "I haven't won her yet, but you can bet your life I am willing to, and I guess she isn't altogether against the idea."

"But I thought it was settled."

"Oh, no; the boys had merely got the same idea into their heads, and I humored them by treating the house, you see."

"But they will take it for an accepted fact, the same as I did."

"Well, let them. I hope it will be soon, for, to tell you the truth, she is the handsomest girl I ever laid eyes on."

"I agree with you there. Who and what is she?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know? And you have been two hours in her company."

"Don't know anything more about her than you do. She is a beautiful enigma. But I am going to solve her, you bet!"

They both laughed.

"Well, I hope you do," said the man called Givins. "If you don't I shall have to. But not likely that she can long resist such a charmer as you are, Duke. I'm not in it with you in the field."

The Duke looked at him none too friendly.

"See here, let me give you a quiet tip," he said. "This thing is all mine, see? Don't try to push in

between me and that girl, Andrew Givins, or we cease to be friends. I do not intrude between you and the Woman Sharp."

"Great Scott! Don't imagine that I am going to buck up against you, Duke. Go in and win; I have already offered my congratulations."

"And I hope you mean it. I thought I would make it plain to you."

"That's all right; here, let me order something, and we will take a quiet drink to your success."

Givins called a waiter and gave an order.

There was a slight line of pallor around his lips, and a flush on each cheek.

He was a beardless man, some fifty years of age, well dressed like the other, and sported a heavy chain across his vest, and a big diamond on his shirt front.

The duke was looking at him from under his brows while he was talking to the waiter for the moment.

"I don't want you to feel that everything isn't straight and aboveboard between you and me, duke," he said, as he turned his attention again to his companion. "That game is yours; I am not in it."

"Glad to hear you say it. There is too much at stake here just now for you and me to fall out."

"You are right. By the way, heard any more about that chap?"

"That stole my horse?"

A half-smile broke upon the other's face.

"Yes," he said.

"Not a word, and it is high time that Hairy and the others were back again. I don't know what to make of it."

"What does the girl have to say about her action in the matter?"

"Oh! she acted on impulse, that's all."

"You are sure of that? But there is something I want to ask you."

"What is it?"

"Where is the diamond pin you used to sport—the cross that had so many stones in it?"

To his surprise, perhaps, the Duke of Pokeropolis turned ghastly pale for a second, and before any response could be made there was a great roar of excitement in the forepart of the room.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A CHANCE FOR LIFE—A TIMELY DEFENSE.

The room was in an uproar.

The Duke and his companion were on their feet instantly.

Music and dancing had stopped, games were suddenly checked, and all eyes were turned toward the doors.

Two men had just entered, staggering under heavy burdens, and those burdens they had dumped



Down upon the floor with two heavy, dead thuds that caused everybody to start.

The men were "Hairy" Walker and "Bull" Garvy, so called.

And the burdens they had flung down upon the floor from their tired shoulders were the two companions who had gone forth with them to the capture of Diamond Dick, Jr.

Half-a-hundred ejaculations were heard at once.

It was many a day since the Palace Hotel had received so chilling a shock as this.

"Your men!" cried Givins.

"And two of them dead!" cried the Duke.

"Proof that they found the man they were looking for, I take it."

"What does this mean, Hairy?" called out the Duke of Pokeropolis, as he strode forward.

"Durnation!" was the growl. "Can't ye see what et means?"

"Who killed these men?"

"Who but that chunk of chain lightnin' you sent us out to git."

"What, and you were four to one against him?"

"Et wouldn't made no difference if we had been forty to one; he had et all his own way."

"And you come back disarmed!"

"That's what we do, and more dead'n alive, carryin' these hyer loads."

"Tell me about it at once."

"Soon told. We laid fer him, held him up, and was about to tie him to bring him back when ther lightnin' struck us, and he was on top when ther smoke cleared away."

"Curse you for a set of cowards!"

"Hairy" Walker turned pale at that, and his eyes flashed ominously.

"That ain't what I 'spected from you, Duke, et ain't," he said, in a pained tone. "You know me, that I ain't no coward; I tell ye we tackled more'n we bargained fer."

The fellow strode to the bar and demanded something to drink.

"And I repeat it that you are a set of cowards!" thundered the Duke of Pokeropolis, white with rage. "There were four of you, and you need not tell me that one man could get away with you like that. Where is he? Why have you lugged these bodies in here?"

The fellow paid no attention until he had drained his glass, and then he turned and faced the Duke of Pokeropolis.

"You call me a coward," he cried, "an' I call you a durn liar! If it had been you——"

Crack!

The Duke had whipped out a pistol and fired on the instant.

"Hairy" had known what to expect when he called

the Duke of Pokeropolis a liar, and he ducked low just at the instant the weapon came up to a level.

The result was the bullet sped harmlessly over Hairy's head and buried itself deep in the wall.

The Duke would have fired again, but a hand caught his arm.

"Hold!"

It was Andrew Givins.

"Don't cut him off yet," he said. "We must first hear what he has to say."

The Duke of Pokeropolis held his fire, but his face was white with passion, and his eyes blazed.

"You called me a coward," cried Hairy, "and thar is proof fer the crowd thet I ain't one. Unarmed, I call ye a liar to yer teeth, 'cause ye aire one. See?"

"Curse you! take——"

"Stop!"

Again did Givins interfere.

"You must first find where that chap is, Duke," he reminded. "Hear what the fellow has to say. I agree with him that he is no coward, by Heaven I do!"

"Have a care how you thwart me, Givins!"

"I don't do it out of any love for him; we want facts, and he is the only man can give them to us."

"There is his pard."

"Yes, too scared to say his soul is his own. We want it straight from Hairy Walker. After that, you can do what you please with him, for all of me."

This reasoning prevailed, and the duke said:

"All right, I have got my temper now."

And with that he shook off the hand that had detained him, and faced Hairy.

"You can thank your stars that you have got a few minutes longer to live," he said. "I missed you the first fire, but I can't miss you again. Now I want your whole story."

"You have had it."

"But what about the fellow you went out to capture. Where is he?"

"I will tell you that on condition."

"Condition! You are in a fine fix to talk about conditions. I am going to kill you in just two minutes by the clock."

"Then you might as well do it now."

Hairy turned to the bar and coolly poured out another glass of poison, and as coolly poured it down his throat.

"You called me a coward, Duke of Pokeropolis," he cried, "and I want ye to prove et. I leave et to the crowd ef I am actin' like a coward jist now."

"You are acting more like a rash fool!" cried the Duke. "I am toying with your life, here with my finger on this trigger. You can't hope to escape my fire a second time."

"And who ther blazes wants to? Shoot now, ef ye wants to, cuss ye!"



Here was a display of nerve that was a surprise to all.

No one would have looked for it in him.

"Will you tell me what I want to know?" thundered the Duke, advancing a step.

Even Andrew Givins did not dare interfere again, for it could be seen that the Duke's passion was exceeding bounds.

"Yes, ef you will agree to give me a show fer my life, I will," was the response.

"Well, curse you! I will do that."

"Good enough; that is all I want. Now I am ready to onwind my story to ye. As I said, ther lightnin' or somethin' akin to et struck us, and when ther smoke cleared we wasn't in et. I ain't no coward, and I ain't no fool; I took what was offered."

"Go on, curse you!"

"Well, that tiger took our weepins and made us shoulder our dead pards that the lightnin' had struck, and he ordered us to tote 'em hyer and dump 'em at your feet with his compliments."

"Fiends seize him!"

"And that ain't quite all yet."

"What more?"

"He sent a special message, sayin' that he would do himself the honor of payin' you a personal visit before many hours went over yer head, or words to ther same effect."

"Let him come here, that is all! But have you anything more to tell me?"

"That about covers ther ground, Duke. Now, I hold ye to yer word."

"But where is that fellow now?"

"I don't know. We didn't know but he was stalkin' our trail, so we thought et was best fer our good health to 'bey his 'structions to the letter, so we have done. Now, what is that chance you are goin' to give me?"

"Chance?"

"Yes, the show fer my life. You called me a coward, and I proved that I wasn't; no man ever called ther Duke of Pokeropolis a liar and lived to tell of it—"

"By Heavens, you are right!"

"And to my knowledge, the Duke of Pokeropolis never broke his word," the man went on. "Now, what is the chance you are goin' to give me?"

The Duke of Pokeropolis was in a quandary.

According to his code, the life of this man was a forfeit to him, and yet he had pledged his word to give him a chance for his life.

Hairy Walker was looking at him fearlessly, and the right of the matter was with him. Every eye was fixed upon the Duke of Pokeropolis, to see what his decision would be.

It came in a few moments.

"You have caught me in a trap," he said. "You

have forfeited your life to me, and yet I own that I must give you a chance for it."

"That's right. What is the chance?"

"You will stand over there against the wall, to begin with."

The Duke of Pokeropolis motioned with his revolver as he spoke, indicating a space between windows at one side of the room.

"And what will I stand thar for?"

"I am going to explain. I am going to give you a show for your life."

"Wull, ther crowd hears what ye say, and they will hold ye to yer word, I reckon. As fer me, I am disarmed, and at yer mercy, so hyer goes."

The man crossed the room boldly and placed his back to the wall between the windows indicated, and the throng in the place made haste to get out of the way.

The Duke of Pokeropolis stood on the other side of the room, his elbow leaning on the end of the bar.

"Now, hyer I be," said Hairy.

"Yes, I see you are, and you are a fine target for a little pistol practice."

"But I was to have a show fer my life," he reminded.

"Yes, so you are. I want you to begin to jump as lively as you know how, first to one side and then the other, and while you jump I will shoot at you, first with one hand and then the other, with two guns, and if I fire ten shots without touching you, you go free."

Some of the rougher of the cutthroats in the place broke out into a loud haw-haw at such a proposal as that.

Others paled as they foresaw the inevitable ending.

"That ain't no chance at all!" cried Hairy.

"Well, I will make it a little better, then. There are two open windows, one on each side of you, and if you can manage to get through one of them before I can hit you, you will still earn your life. If I don't touch the quick you stand a chance of recovery anyhow, and it will be a lesson not to call the Duke of Pokeropolis a liar again."

"Then you mean to murder me, after all!"

"I give you just five second in which to begin your antics," said the Duke of Pokeropolis, in a hard voice. "If you choose to throw away the chance I offer you, that is your business."

At that moment a lithe form vaulted in at one of the open windows with the quickness of a tiger; the same motion apparently placed him between the doomed man and his would-be slayer—for, of course, Hairy Walker stood no earthly chance for his life; and two gleaming guns covered the heart of the Duke of Pokeropolis.



## CHAPTER X.

FAST AND FURIOUS—EVENTS AND ENIGMAS.

"Steady, here!"

That was the shout of the newcomer.

There was a momentary pause, and in that pause a woman's cry broke the silence.

A flash of violet and yellow, a gleam of golden hair from under a snowy sombrero and Fancy Fan dashed into the open space.

She placed herself before the Duke of Pokeropolis, stretching out her arms.

"Spare him!" she cried. "Let there be no shooting here, I beg!"

It all took place quicker than eye can follow the descriptive words, and the crowd in the saloon was breathless.

The newcomer wore a half-mask, was a man of medium stature, and had the appearance of being of athletic build. The way he had entered the room bore some testimony to that.

"It will be altogether as the gentleman elects," the newcomer said, in a clear, ringing voice.

"Who are you?" cried the Duke of Pokeropolis.

"One whom you have met before."

He was clad in the plainest manner, wearing a suit of jean that looked as if it had been cut for a Chinaman.

There was but one bright spot about him, not taking into count the glittering revolvers he held steadily to the fore, and that was a cluster of diamonds in his tie.

"You are that escaped horse thief!" cried the duke. "Boys, this is the man we want!"

"You miss your guess, my friend," said the unknown.

"Then what are you doing here? What business have you to interfere with what does not concern you?"

"But, pardon me, this does concern me. It was your intention to murder this man in cold blood, and I don't propose to allow it if I can help it. Now I guess it is horse and horse between us."

"By Heavens! if you are not out of the way in one second I will bore you, and kill him through your body!"

"Steady! If you so much as move a muscle, I will let drive at you."

"And kill this lady?"

"She is nothing to me; she takes the risk, and hence must accept the consequences."

There was an awkward balk.

"Do not shoot, I beg!" cried out Fancy Fan.

"I leave it altogether with your friend there," said the unknown.

"But your pledge to me, sir."

"Ha! I thought so," muttered the duke.

"I know you not," said the man of the mask. "I

have made no pledge to anybody save this man I am protecting. He has my pledge that he shall have a fair showing here!"

"And the time for further farce is past," said a low voice, just behind the unknown. "I note that you have more guns in your belt; will you allow me to draw two of them and step out side by side with you?"

"Draw them, but remain behind me," was the command. "I think I can conduct this funeral all right; but you will need the tools in hand if I go down."

This was said in a brief moment.

Before further action could follow, the loud, deep-mouthed baying of bloodhounds was heard, almost at hand.

Another moment, and in at the window, one after the other, leaped three fierce, ferocious brutes, whose heads proclaimed their breed at sight.

No sooner had the first landed on the floor of the saloon than it began sniffing the planks, and in another instant it made a leap at the throat of the masked unknown.

A step backward, a flash and a report, and the dog fell back and rolled over dead, but in its jaws was the mask that had covered the face of the unknown, and Diamond Dick, Jr., stood forth.

Another of the animals was leaping for his throat. Crack!

That one went the way of the first, and a cry and gurgling caused Bertie to look behind him.

The third of the brutes had sprung upon "Hairy Walker," and was clinging at his throat, not really having a hold upon the flesh, but upon the bushy whiskers and a knotted kerchief.

Crack!

The third rolled over, but with it went the bushy hair and tangled beard of "Hairy Walker," and he stood forth another man entirely.

On the other side of the room the Duke of Pokeropolis stood like one in a trance, yet watching with bated breath this frightful contest and the rapid revelations it was making.

At sight of the denuded face of "Hairy Walker," a cry that was not unlike a woman's scream at its first sound leaped to his lips.

He took a stride forward, his eyes dilated.

Like a flash, Fancy Fan wheeled and faced him with a revolver at his head.

"Back!" she cried.

"What do you mean, girl?" cried the Duke.

"I mean business straight from the shoulder, you bet!" was the return.

"Put away that thing!"

"I will not, and I warn you to stand where you are. While I would protect you with my life, yet the life of another is also dear to me."

"You mean that boy?"



"None of your business; I bid you stand!"

The crowd could hardly follow with eyes and ears what was thus taking place so rapidly.

Bertie, with half an eye upon the Duke of Pokeropolis, was also dividing his gaze between him and the man at his side, who had undergone such a transformation.

"Who and what are you, anyhow?" he was demanding.

"That I cannot tell you now," was the response.

"Stand by me, if you will, and I will stand by you. I doubt my getting out of here with my life now."

"We will make them sick if you don't," said Bertie. "Which one here is your especial foe?"

"I don't know; I am mystified; she—he—she may not yet have appeared. Who and what is that girl in violet and yellow?"

"You ask me too much."

"I have seen that face—— Ha! great Heavens!"

In at the door rushed a being that looked to be more devil than human, a giant in size, with only a coat of skins about his middle.

Dark, hideous, his mouth half-open, and frightful canine teeth protruding, his eyes staring and blood-shot, and in his grasp a terrible bludgeon—— Who and what was he—it?

With a snarl that was more dog-like than human, he ran forward and dropped beside the dead dogs, feeling and smelling of first one and then another.

Up leaped the hideous man-brute, his eyes rolling, his bludgeon beginning to describe a circle as he was about to spring to the attack.

Forward he sprang, straight at Bertie.

Diamond Dick, Jr.'s gun came up instantly, and—crack!

But in the same instant he had been jerked backward with force, and a woman stood where he had stood only the fraction of a second before.

And as she took his place, this woman uttered a command in a tongue that was understood by none present, at the sound of which the hideous man-monster stopped with raised club.

Bertie had been merely swung around, and his bullet had gone harmlessly into the ceiling.

The woman was masked.

A close-fitting band of red was drawn over her face, leaving only eyes and lips exposed.

With a few hasty words to the hideous creature, who seemed under a spell to obey her, wild man though he was, she gave an impetuous motion, and he leaped through a window and was gone.

The woman wheeled instantly and faced Diamond Dick, Jr.

But he saw at once that it was not for him she sought; it was for the unknown.

"Where is he?" she demanded.

"Seems to be gone," said Bertie, with all the coolness usual with him.

"And what was he to you? What are you to him?"

"We were pards for the moment, that was all."

"Are you sure that was all?"

"That was all."

"Because, take warning; the hand that befriends that man is against mine, and nothing can stay my vengeance—nothing!"

"I am not running up against you," said Bertie.

"I know neither you nor him, and therefore can have no interest in your little difference, whatever it may be."

"Well, I have warned you, so take care."

Without looking at another person in the room, apparently without turning her head, she went to the door and out.

The spell was broken, and a murmur of comment was heard on every hand.

The dogs—the brute—the woman; who, what were they?

Questions thick and fast.

The set-to that had preceded this strange advent had been lost sight of for the moment.

Diamond Dick, Jr., however, still had his weapons in hand, and stood awaiting whatever action the Duke of Pokeropolis might take.

But just then the Duke had something else to claim his attention, apparently, for he had recoiled and stood leaning against the end of the bar, white to the lips.

He was staring straight at Fancy Fan.

"What has come over you?" the girl asked, advancing to him.

Diamond Dick, Jr., saw that his gaze was fastened not upon the girl's face, but upon her breast.

Her back was partly turned toward Bertie, but he guessed what it was the Duke was looking at—the diamond cross, the broken portion of which he was wearing on his tie.

Bertie had carefully sewed it there since we saw him with it before.

"I—this is—nothing," the Duke of Pokeropolis answered, lifting his eyes to her face.

Diamond Dick, Jr., now crossed the room to him.

"Well, is it peace or war between us?" he demanded.

At the sound of the voice, at sight of the face, the former fire gleamed in the Duke's eyes.

"It is war—war to the death!" he cried, fiercely.

"No; it must not be—shall not be!" interposed Fancy Fan. "Remember, you pledged your word——"

"I am mindful of the pledge," said Bertie.

"You denied it a moment ago."

"Yes, when I was incog., and was playing a bluff. You see the situation, Duke of Pokeropolis."

"What do you mean?"

"You say it shall be war—war to the death, and I



am handicapped by a pledge to this lady that I will not take your life. I am handicapped."

"So much the better for me," was the fierce retort. "You stole my horse, and the penalty for that crime is death—the citizens of this town demand your life——"

"No!"

"No! no!"

From everywhere came the cry; they admired the courage that had been displayed, as well as feared the hand that was so cunning with weapons.

At that instant the Duke of Pokeropolis caught sight of the diamond cluster on Bertie's tie—the piece that had been broken from the cross worn by Fancy Fan.

His eyes started, he leaned forward, and then, instantly recollecting what he was doing, he recovered.

But it was too late; actions had spoken.

"I see you recognize the piece," said Bertie, putting his finger to it so as to draw also Fancy Fan's attention. "Would you mind telling me where you ever saw it before?"

Fancy Fan had leaned forward to look, and, with a cry, she recoiled from the wearer, exclaiming:

"Then it was you, and not he? Great Heavens! where is this maze of mystery to terminate? I shall go mad, mad, if the end does not come soon!"

At that moment a cry arose in the room, and there, staggering in at the door, with the blood spurting in jets from a wound in his breast, came Andrew Givins.

"After her!" he cried—rather gasped. "After her—that she-devil of the red mask! She has killed me—I die! I die! I know not who it was; maybe it was—was——"

But, his strength gone, he went headlong to the floor. And instantly, with a wild cry, the Duke of Pokeropolis ran forward and threw himself on his knees beside the dying man.

## CHAPTER XI.

### DENOUEMENT—TRAGEDY—RETRIBUTION.

Diamond Dick, Jr., and Fancy Fan looked at each other.

"What does it mean, what can it mean?" the dashing girl asked, all a-tremble with excitement.

"You may hang me for a sick cat if I know head or tail of it," declared Bertie, speaking his honest mind. "I thought I knew a little bit, but I am all at sea."

"Can we not, at least, understand each other?"

"There is no time now for a talk; I will see you later, if we live to get out of this hell hole."

"We must live, we must get out. It can be said in a few words. You hold one part of a diamond pin

of which I have the main portion. How came it in your possession?"

"It was put there for a purpose. And your part—where did you get that?"

"I found it—where it was lost."

"You took me for the slayer of Anita Manaton?"

"Yes! yes! I did not believe that you were Diamond Dick, Jr., as you said; I did not dare trust you; I thought perhaps they were right after all, and that you were a horse thief. Oh! can you pardon me?"

"Freely, if you can pardon me for the thought that it was you who had slain the wife of Sigmund Manaton. Your eyes said no, that you were innocent; but there on your breast was the pin, the accusing finger that proclaimed you a murderess!"

"Yes, yes, we were at cross-purposes. But we still have our hands full, more than full. We can work in harmony."

"Yes, but you puzzle me still. Why do you protect——"

The Duke of Pokeropolis had leaped to his feet, and a call from him drew all attention.

"Men of Pokeropolis, I have never appealed to you in vain—I do not want to appeal to you in vain now," he said, in a loud voice. "Here is a crime, a dastardly crime, one that must be avenged!"

There was a shout of approval.

"This man was my friend—my best, my only friend. Perhaps you have not thought so, for at times we were at variance. He did not know me at my best in this guise—— Ha! what need I care now? It is over and done. I will confess all, and I know you will help me then." There was a change in his voice as he concluded, and, with a sweep of his hand, tore mustache and goatee from his lips, and lo! it was a woman!

"The Woman Sharp!"

That was the cry that was heard.

"Yes, the Woman Sharp, as you have also known me," said the Duke of Pokeropolis. "And, being a woman, I loved—loved! You will recall that you never saw the Duke of Pokeropolis and the Woman Sharp at one and the same time; it was impossible. But he is dead, dead! and who will aid me in my vengeance?"

Half-a-hundred voices shouted:

"I will!"

At that moment there was another commotion near the door, and the unknown—erstwhile "Hairy Walker"—dashed into the room.

In his arms, with its head pressed tightly under his arm, he held a small bloodhound that was snarling and snapping viciously and struggling to escape from his hold.

"Where is the young fellow who backed me a while ago?" he demanded, as he ran his eyes over the crowd. "Ah, there you are!" as his eyes rested upon



Diamond Dick, Jr. "Come, I want you; with this hound we can follow them to their lair, and capture that murderess!"

"Whom do you mean?" demanded the Duke of Pokeropolis, turning upon him.

At sight of her face, as it was now, the man stopped and stared.

"You!" he cried.

"Then you know me?"

"Know you, Helen Roydon?"

"You called her Albert Cleary," said Diamond Dick, Jr., turning to Fancy Fan.

"I know, I know, but I was mistaken! My God! it is enough to turn one's head. Yonder man is Albert Cleary—— Go with him, protect his life, and have my undying gratitude!"

Bertie had noted one thing; that Fancy Fan was trembling with suppressed excitement.

"We will meet again," said the Woman Sharp.

"But come, friend," urged he whom we will now call Albert Cleary; "the trail is warm, and we can run them down and bring that wretched woman back here to answer for her foul deed."

Bertie gave Fancy Fan's hand a press, and responded:

"I am with you!"

Cleary turned and hastened out, and Bertie followed closely after him.

"A more dastardly murder I never saw," said Cleary, when Bertie came up with him. "She plunged her knife into him with delight, while that big brute held him helpless!"

"She must have had a just cause," said Bertie. "No woman could do such a deed otherwise."

"Nevertheless she shall answer for the crime, I swear it!"

"Then the dead man was something to you?"

"Sigmund Manaton something to me? He was the husband of a woman I once idolized—his murdered wife, Anita, and I believe that this she devil was the slayer of both!"

"Well, where is the trail? We'll put the dog on it, and start——"

"But we must have a strap or rope to hold the dog, or he will soon distance us."

"Here is just the thing. Hold him, and I will bridle and muzzle him at the same time, and we will be off. I am eager to see this thing to the finish now."

The dog was soon fixed, and was then put down on the ground.

For a moment it sniffed around, and then, with a snarl and whine, it tugged at its leash.

Cleary was holding the brute, with a turn of the leash around his wrist, and he and Bertie followed where it led, observing silence as much as possible.

It proved about as rough and rugged a trail as either Diamond Dick, Jr., or his new-found partner had ever traveled. It zigzagged in and out as it went upward into the mountain strongholds.

Had the dog been free, it would have left them in no time. As it was, it had to be held back, and made to suit its pace to theirs.

Little was said, and it seemed as if the trail was never-ending.

At last they reached a plateau, and on the far side of that came to a split in the solid wall of rock that backed it.

Into that crevice the dog darted, tugging furiously at the leash, and Cleary and Bertie followed, there being just room for them to pass through and little to spare.

From that point on, the way was level as a floor.

Presently they smelled smoke, and each drew a weapon and held it ready for instant service.

The cause of the smoke, however, was soon revealed, when they came to a smoldering firebrand that lay close by the entrance to an ancient temple of the Pecos.

"Proof that they are here," whispered Cleary.

"Yes, and that we have got to be ready for some lively business," answered Bertie.

"We are done with the dog?"

"Yes; cut his throat."

This was done, and the carcass was thrown aside out of the way.

Then Cleary, carrying the firebrand, and Bertie, walking by his side, with his barkers in hand, they ventured into the temple.

Cautiously they proceeded, until at last they heard voices, and almost immediately broke upon their ears the loud, fierce baying of bloodhounds, so near at hand that they stopped and recoiled.

"Look out!" whispered Cleary.

"And you," responded Bertie.

The voices had stopped instantly, but the baying of the dogs continued, yet as they did not disappear the two daring invaders pressed forward again.

At a turn of the passage they were in they came



suddenly into a secret crypt of the old temple, where, at one side, was an altar with a sacred fire brightly blazing.

Near the fire, which he had evidently recently replenished, stood the hideous creature, Diablo, whom we have seen before. Not far distant was the woman, the "Witch of the Pecos," as she was known, reclining and evidently resting after her recent hard climb.

At sight of the invaders she leaped to her feet with a scream.

"Diablo! it is not the lost hound! It is foes! Quick! unleash the hounds! Attack them with your club! They have come to hold me accountable for the vengeance I have wrought!"

As she uttered the words she sprang at Bertie with a stiletto in her hand.

In the same instant the hideous man-brute freed the dogs, and they leaped forward, and Diablo sprang at Bertie with his bludgeon lifted to crush his skull.

Bertie could have killed the woman at the first instant, but he desired to take her alive if possible. He had no compunction about the savage brute, however, and while Cleary thrust the firebrand in the faces of the bloodhounds, Bertie sent a bullet crashing through the head of the monster.

Instantly then Bertie closed with the woman, to deprive her of the stiletto with which she was seeking to effect a sanguinary purpose upon him, leaving Cleary to attend to the bloodhounds, which he seemed to be amply capable of doing. It was a lively struggle while it lasted, but it was of short duration only, for the dogs were speedily dead and the woman a prisoner.

But she was not tamed. She cried and shrieked, frothing at the mouth in her frenzy, and it was clear that she was not far short of being insane, if she was not indeed quite so. Her captors had to bind and gag her most effectually before they could do anything with her, and that having been done, they prepared for their return to Pokeropolis. There was plenty of material for the sacred fire at hand, and, committing the possible sacrilege of appropriating some of this for a baser purpose, they used it to light themselves out of the temple and on their return journey.

The town was quiet when they arrived, but the Palace Hotel was ablaze with light, and they went straight there. When they entered the crowd

pressed around them, eager to see their prisoner, and learn more about the rapid events they had witnessed. Fancy Fan was there, also the "Duke" of Pokeropolis—the "Woman Sharp," or Helen Roydon, as we have seen her called. She was pale to the lips now, and when she saw who the prisoner was, a light of fury blazed up in her eyes, and she leaped forward with a knife in her grasp.

"You!" she cried. "False prophetess, your doom is sealed!"

"Back!" ordered Bertie. "Have done with bloodshed; there has been enough."

She recoiled before a gun in his hand, and a man seized her arms from behind and held her in spite of her struggles.

"Some explanation is due you, people of Pokeropolis," said Bertie, then motioning the crowd to silence. "You came close to fitting me out with a necktie, but, thanks to this noble girl, I escaped, and I will hold no malice against you. What brought me here was a diamond clew, this fragment of a pin which you see on my tie. The rest of the pin is worn on the scarf of Fancy Fan."

"This piece in my possession was given to me by Gilbert Manaton, who desired me to find with it his brother Sigmund, and bring to justice, if possible, the slayer of Sigmund's wife, named Anita. He had last heard of his brother up in this section, and hence the clew led me hither. Sigmund had set out to find and wreak vengeance upon the slayer of his wife, but for a long time he had not been heard from, and, as there was a big estate at stake, Gilbert was anxious to find him or have proof of the fact of his death."

"Sigmund Manaton's first wife, Inez, was insanely jealous of him. She wanted his every look and smile for herself. He was fond of her, but soon tired of her complaints and left her. Then, later, he met and loved Anita Collier; he procured legal separation from the first wife, who, meantime, had escaped from an institution in which she had been placed, and was supposed to be dead. But she was not dead, and I believe that we have her here in the person of the Witch of the Pecos."

"This diamond clew, to return to that, was found in the room where Anita Manaton was murdered, and it was believed that it was lost there by the person who killed her. I believe that was right, but I am at a loss to connect it with this woman. I must here call upon this lady, Fancy Fan, to tell you how



the other part of the pin came into her hands, and to whom it belonged."

"I found it in the room where my sister was murdered," here spoke up Fancy Fan. "My true name is Kate Collier, and since that frightful night I have been devoting my time to the finding of my sister's slayer, with this for my only clew. I have gone from place to place, openly wearing it, in the hope that some one would recognize it and thus lead me to the end of my purpose. The first one to recognize it was this noble gentleman," indicating Diamond Dick, Jr. "I told my lover of my purpose, and ran away from him, determined not to wed him until my purpose was accomplished. I knew he was seeking me, and when I saw this woman, your Duke of Pokeropolis, I believed I had found Albert Cleary. But I was wrong; this gentleman is he," and she held out a hand to the recent "Hairy Walker." "For a private reason I visited my sister by night, clandestinely, and on that last occasion I could not have been an hour after the murder, and, afraid that I might possibly be accused myself, I went stealthily away. Who killed her, I do not know, but I believe Diamond Dick, Jr., is right in the guess he has expressed."

"He is wrong, wrong!" suddenly cried the Woman Sharp—"Duke of Pokeropolis." "The hand that cut short the life of Anita Manaton was mine, curse her memory! I would do it again, could I live and suffer as I did live and suffer. Nay, do not strike your blow until you have heard all," facing Fancy Fan, who stood in the act of leaping upon her, a dirk in her hand. "I loved Sigmund Manaton, and I would have won him had not that baby-faced thing come between us. He discarded me, and then I swore that I would take the life of the woman for whom he had cast me off as he might have cast off a fond dog that had licked his hand and groveled at his feet. I murdered her, yes, I did it; but first I went to consult with the Witch of the Pecos, there to find, to my surprise, that she was Inez, his first wife. She urged me on, though I needed no urging, and she prophesied that by doing the deed I would eventually gain my object. She lied, curse her, she lied to me!"

"Free the mouth of that woman," said Bertie, indicating the Witch. "Let us hear what she has to tell us more."

This was done, and in the same act her hands were likewise freed, and her feet, by some excited fellow

who did not understand fully the order; but strong men still held her.

"It is true, all true, all true!" that wretched being shrieked. "I would that my own hand could have done the deed! I thought the law would surely end this one's life. I was not so crazy that I was blind to my own desires in it. Ha, ha, ha!"

Her laugh was a shriek, and a hand was put over her mouth.

"Yes, she lied to me!" cried the Woman Sharp, making an effort to get at her. "And at last she has cheated me of him—she came here and killed him when I was again trying to win his affection. Andrew Givins, as he was known here, did not know who I was, but I knew him, and while as the Duke of Pokeropolis I watched him, as the Woman Sharp I tried to win him. Ah! would you?"

With a sudden outburst of strength, the Witch of the Pecos had broken away from the men who were holding her, and she dashed upon the Woman Sharp with a cry of fury. Instinctively the men who held the Woman Sharp let go their hold and sprang away, and the "Duke" leaped forward to meet her mortal foe. There was a savage collision, muttered imprecations fell from their lips; a rapid flash and play of glittering steel, screams, moans, and both dropped dying to the floor.

Little more remains to be told. To dwell upon details which, in the light of the revelation we have made, must be obvious to the reader, would be superfluous. When the crowd drew its breath again, after that thrilling tragedy, Fancy Fan and Albert Cleary were found locked in each other's arms. When Diamond Dick, Jr., turned toward them, each held out a hand to him. Fan gave Bertie her hearty thanks, and Cleary asked his pardon for the rough hand he had been obliged to play against him; for, in order not to awaken the suspicion of the Duke of Pokeropolis, he had been obliged to play his rôle to the last limit. Bertie took leave of them and sought adventure new.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 302, will contain "Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Ride for Life; or, The Hoboes of Hunnewell."

A thriller, boys, and no mistake. The ride for life was at express-train speed, and that's the way the whole story moves from start to finish.





This contest is like an automobile going at express train speed.

Nothing can stop it.

Don't try to stop it, boys.

Jump right in and come along, too. If you don't know how, look on page 31.

### An Adventure With Eagles.

(By Alfred Kennedy, Colorado.)

Two boys who lived in Denver once thought they would take their guns and hunt for a grizzly bear, which was known to be in the mountains nearby.

They were George and Harry Bredford, twelve and fourteen years of age. So one bright autumn morning, without letting their parents know where they were going, they saddled their horses, took their rifles, their revolvers and knives, together with their lunch and blankets, and started for the mountain.

It was sundown when they reached the mountains, so they lariatied their horses out, ate supper, rolled up in their blankets and were soon asleep.

The next morning they were up bright and early, ate breakfast and were soon on the road again.

They traveled till about ten o'clock without seeing anything, when they were suddenly startled by a loud scream and looking upward they saw two large eagles soaring in the air and looking down at them.

"I'll wager there is a nest close by," said Harry.

"No doubt," answered George, "or those old eagles wouldn't be so uneasy."

"I'm going to find that nest before I leave," answered Harry, as they started on.

On coming into an open place they saw, several hundred feet above them, upon a projecting crag, a large nest which they knew was the eagle's nest. Tying their horses, they started up the steep and rocky side of the mountain, taking a rope along to aid in climbing. When within about fifteen feet of the nest it was found impossible for them to go any farther without the aid of the rope, so Harry threw it at a stump on the edge of the crag, but missed. The next time, though, he was successful, and the noose settled down over the stump. Slinging his gun over his shoulder, he started up the rope. The old eagles by this time were greatly excited. George soon followed Harry, and they quickly found themselves looking down upon two young eagles.

The boys were about to take the young birds when the old ones came sweeping down upon them. Lifting their weapons they emptied the magazines at the old ones, but only two or three of these bullets went to the

mark, and they only served to madden them. Before they could draw their revolvers one grabbed Harry while the other lit on George, tearing his clothes and scratching his face.

Harry managed to get his revolver and placing it to the bird's breast, fired. With a loud flutter of wings the bird fell over on the ropes below, with a bullet in its heart. Then he ran to assist George, who had not fared quite so well. His eagle had him down with its talons in his clothes and was beating him mercilessly with its wings. Placing his revolver at the eagle's head, Harry fired and the other bird fell down to the side of its mate.

Then the boys, taking the young eagles, descended to the old eagles below. Tying one to each horse, they each took one of the young eagles and started for home, which they reached the next evening at about five o'clock, being away three days.

Their parents were glad to see them. They received a large sum for their prize, the old birds being stuffed and the young ones being tamed.

### My Adventure in a Fire.

(By Archie Goehring, Florida.)

I was awakened one morning by hearing people shouting:

"Fire! fire!"

I jumped out of my bed, put on my clothes, and ran downstairs into the street.

About two blocks away from my house I saw a large house in a mass of flames.

I ran toward the house as quickly as I could.

The firemen were doing their best to extinguish the fire. Suddenly I heard a shrill feminine scream, and looking up at the house I saw a beautiful young girl stationed at one of the windows of the burning structure.

"My gracious!" I shouted, "I must save that girl," and I pulled open a door, and ran up a flight of stairs which led to the second floor.

I reached the head of the stairs and ran to another flight of stairs which led up to the third floor.

I was already weakening. The smoke was streaming down the stairs. Could I be in time to save the girl?



"Yes, yes! I must!"

When I reached the head of the second flight of stairs I saw that the room in which I was in was full of smoke. I blindly ran over to one of the windows. Suddenly I stumbled over an object which lay on the floor.

I stooped down and felt what the object was.

It was the young girl whose cries had brought me to the rescue. I had not a moment to lose, and picking up the girl I ran hastily down the stairs. I had yet another flight of stairs to go down.

Could I get outside of the building before it broke in?

With this question on my mind, I hurried all the faster. I had just reached the last step and sprang out of the door when the building tottered and crashed inward.

Then I lost my senses.

The next thing I knew was that I was lying on a cot, and a crowd of people standing around me.

Then I heard the doctor say:

"Oh! he will be all right in a couple of days."

I was better in two days and began walking around. Lately I received a visit from the girl whom I had saved. She thanked me all kinds of ways for saving her life; but I told her that I did not need any thanks.

### How the Thrasher Was Unloaded.

(By Duff Caraway, Hico, Texas.)

On the 19th of May, 1902, a man from Dallas, Texas, was going to unload a thrasher and engine. First he had a large pile of twenty or thirty cross ties. He had fixed a slanting chute out of them.

He connected the engine and thrasher together and started down the chute. It was most too slanting, and the engine could not hold it, there was some part of the engine slipped and the thrasher came down it got overbalanced and fell off of the flat car, there it lay all in a wreck.

The men tried and tried to raise it onto its wheels, but failed. And at last the men all got ropes and pulled it onto its wheels. One of the men that caused the thrasher to be wrecked said:

"Say, Tom, go up in town and get a box of cigars."

So off went the man and soon returned with a box of cigars and every man that helped pull it up got a cigar. They stayed in town until the next day and left for the country. I think the loss was at least \$100.

### Revenge.

(By Clinton Treshaus, Col.)

In the fall of the year of 1868 my uncle, who was one of those rugged men who braved the dangers of pioneer life, decided to abandon his rude log cabin in Kentucky and "hit the grit" for the far West.

He enthused many of his neighbors with the idea and when they started there was a large caravan of prairie schooners. California was their destination, and they crossed the great plains and many were the fights and skirmishes they had with the Indians.

At last they neared their destination, but fate had so decreed that not all of them should reach there. One night they camped in a beautiful valley and after they

had formed their wagons in a square, as was customary, they began to detect Indian signs, and soon a horde of Washoe warriors descended upon the little camp with savage war cries.

The Indians were ten to one and the fight did not last long.

Only three of the emigrants were captured alive and among them was my uncle.

Soon the three escaped and made their way to a settlement where they gathered a small army and returned to the battleground and the now sleeping Indians.

They put them all to death and soon all was still.

### The Coward's Bravery.

(By S. T. Davis, Maryland.)

About two o'clock the city of H— was awakened by the cry of fire. People rushed through the streets to the scene of the fire.

It was a wealthy merchant's house, one of the finest in the city. The fire was making its way up through the third floor when a cry was heard. It was the man's little girl at a window.

A young man rushed from the crowd, got a ladder and leaned it against the house. He was up it in a little while, but the child had disappeared from the window now. He went into the room.

Then smoke was seen pouring from the window. He appeared now with the child, a bed sheet tied around her.

With this he lowered her to the ladder, which she soon climbed down.

Now the smoke and fire were eating their way along the wall. He had to run through this to reach the ladder, but he didn't hesitate. He was down in a moment, and the crowd sent up a yell.

The man they had often before called a coward was a hero.

### Deep-Sea Fishing Off the Maine Coast.

(By Harold G. Brown, Maine.)

In the summer of 1898 Edward Stearns, Charlie Simson and myself left Idle Park, a summer resort on the New Meadows River, at two o'clock in the afternoon, intending to be gone all night, for Mark Island gully fishing ground, which is about twenty miles south of Cundy's Harbor, when we stopped to get our bait, and as there were a lot of swordfishing vessels bound out, we waited and went out with them, which proved to be a bad thing for us. We followed them out about five miles, and got among a lot of swordfish, and the men stationed on a raised step in the bow of the vessels threw their spears and got fast to three good-sized fish, and we were motioned to keep out of the way, but before we could make a move one fish turned and came straight for us and struck our boat about amidships, very nearly turning her over. I was thrown overboard by the shark, and while Simson helped me back into the boat Stearns grabbed an oar and broke the fish sword short off. The boat began to fill with such a hole in her and the fisherman, seeing our plight, came about and made fast to us and took us aboard. They hoisted up the boat and



et the water run out of her, and then packed the hole up with canvas.

After the boat was fixed the captain said to us:

"I am going to put you ashore at Small Point Harbor and I hope it will be a lesson to you in the future to keep away from swordfish in a small boat."

We told him that it would be. We made arrangements to have our boat fixed properly and sent home to us, and hired a team and got home about eight o'clock in the evening.

I am the happy possessor of the sword, which hangs in my room to-day, and every time I look at it it reminds me of our exciting fishing trip off the Maine coast.

### To the Rescue.

(By I. F. Jeffreys, Texas.)

The incident I write about happened in Lampas County, on the Colorado River. In the year of 1900 the farms all along the valley were covered with water all the way from one foot to twelve feet in the low places. In some places the people were cut off from the mainland by the water. I joined a party of men to go to their rescue.

We carried our boats in wagons till we came to the water. It was a solid sea, four and five miles wide in places. The boat I was in had three others beside myself. We went to the rescue of a man and three little children that were hanging to a drift. We got to them and got them in the boat and started to the land with them. We then had the misfortune to run our boat on to a log that was partly under water, and in trying to get off the snag we capsized our boat and were all thrown in the water. I happened to be the nearest to the boat, and I caught hold of it and held on to it till one of the men came to my aid. We turned it over and baled the water out with our hats. We then got some bark and managed to row back to the shore where we got some more oars, and returned for our companions that were still clinging to the log.

### A Hold-up.

(By Fred Archer, S. C.)

In February, this year, at a station known as the Fifty-four Mile Place, the Southern train was held up by train robbers, led by Bartow Warren, and the express safe carried off on a wagon to a river nearby, and then they unloaded it and put it in the river so it could not be found.

The robbers then went down the river and built a camp so they could watch it and keep anybody from finding it. The sheriff heard of the robbery and went in pursuit. They tracked the robbers to the river and then lost the trail. Some weeks after the leader, Bartow Warren, was found drowned just below where the safe was found.

This was the second time that Warren had robbed the train, and he was also wanted for several other things.

 \$1 worth of Tricks & Make-ups, sent postpaid for 25 cents stamps or 1 silver. A nice Moustache or full Beard, Irish or Side Whiskers, any color, bottle Spirit Gum to stick them on, Box of Burnt Cork to blacken up, Ink, Rubber Mouth, big teeth, secret & apparatus for performing the great vanishing half-dollar trick. This big offer is to get your address to send my large illus. cat'g of plays, vignettes & magic latest novel titles. Mention paper you saw this in and I will also put in a Heavy GOLD plate paper King VASE, send size. Address Chas. Marshall, Mfr., Lockport, N.Y.

## Do You Want . . .

## A COMPLETE FISHING ASSORTMENT?

Look on the Back Cover of No. 293 for a Picture and Description of One . . .

If you enter this contest you will have a chance for the finest and most complete assortment of Fishing Tackle ever offered.

## 7 COMPLETE ASSORTMENTS 7 GIVEN AWAY

By winning a prize you can fit yourself out as a dealer in fishing supplies. The seven boys who send in the seven best contributions in this new

## Amateur Journalism CONTEST

will each receive a Famous Fishing Tackle Assortment. Of course you want to own one. Then get into this contest without delay.

## 7-COMPLETE OUTFITS GIVEN AWAY-7

### HERE ARE FULL DIRECTIONS:

Take any incident you can think of. It may be a fire, a runaway, an accident, an adventure, or even a murder. It doesn't matter whether you were there or not. Write it up as graphically as you can, make it full of "action," and send it to us. The article should not be over 500 words in length. The Contest closes September 1st. Send in your stories at once, boys. All the best ones will be published during the progress of the contest. Remember, whether your story wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with your name.

Cut out the accompanying Coupon, and send it, with your story, to the DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY, Care of STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York.

No contribution with which a Coupon is not enclosed will be considered.

### COUPON

Diamond Dick Weekly Amateur Journalism Contest No. 4

Name.....

Street and Number.....

City or Town.....

State.....

Title of Story.....



# DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY

(LARGE SIZE.)

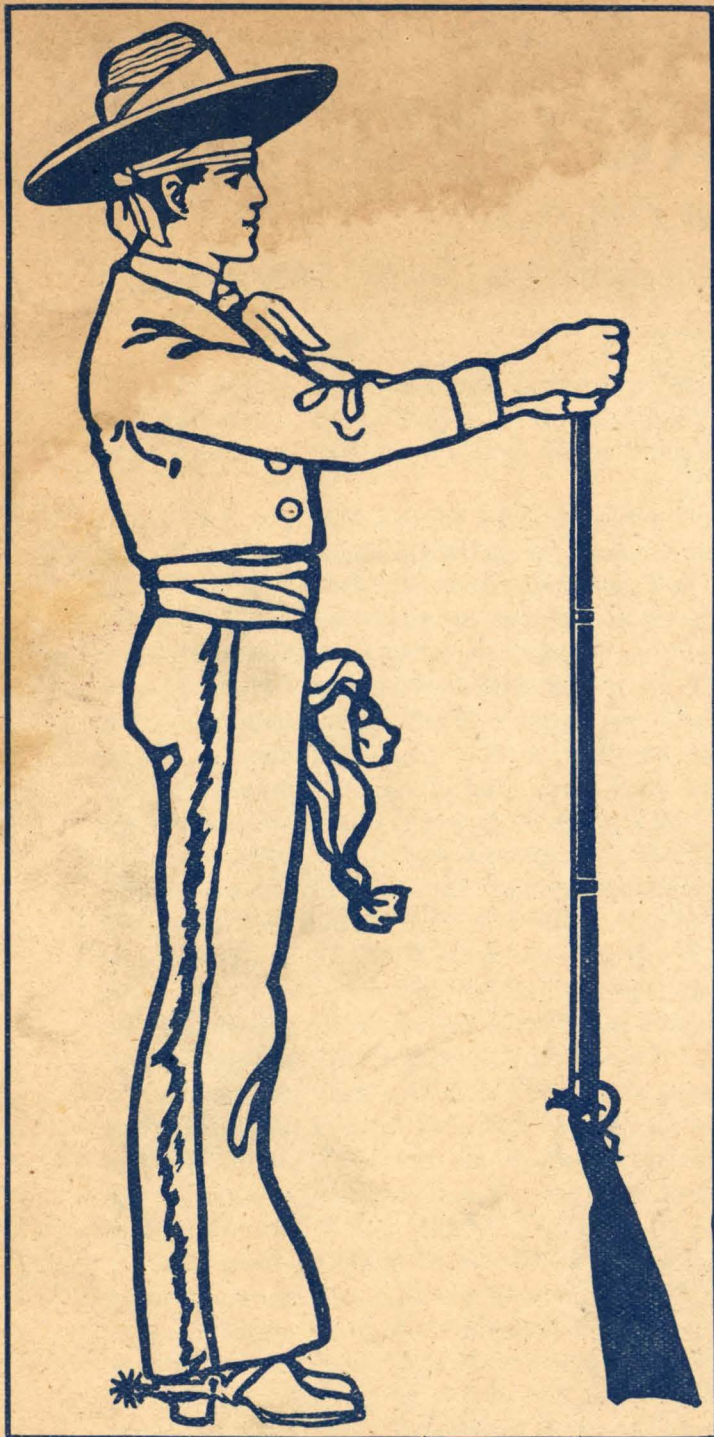
The most Unique and Fascinating Tales of Western Romance.

- 267—Diamond Dick's Helping Hand; or, The Battle of Apache Hill.
- 268—Diamond Dick's Play to Win; or, Up Against the Mine Brokers.
- 269—Diamond Dick on the Trail of the Smugglers; or, Two-Spot and the Kid from Nowhere.
- 270—Diamond Dick and the Brothers of the Bowie; or, The Fight for the Rich "Pocket."
- 271—Diamond Dick's Blacklist; or, Branded as Traitors.
- 272—Diamond Dick's Railroad Deal; or, The Message from Midnight Pass.
- 273—Diamond Dick's Set-to with the Keever Gang; or, The Trouble with No. 7.
- 274—Diamond Dick and the Hannibal County Desperadoes; or, Against Judge and Jury.
- 275—Diamond Dick's Moonlight Attack; or, The Freight Thieves of the T. N. & P. Railroad.
- 276—Diamond Dick's Deadly Charge; or, The Cattle Rustler's Ambush.
- 277—Diamond Dick on the Bean Trail; or, Black Bill's Doom.
- 278—Diamond Dick in Chicago; or, A Bold Game in the Metropolis.
- 279—Diamond Dick's Quick Action; or, The Fastest Fight on Record.
- 280—Diamond Dick's Fair Enemy; or, The Plot of the Mexican Girl.
- 281—Diamond Dick and the Express Robbers; or, Tornado Kate's Ten Strike.
- 282—Diamond Dick's Four of a Kind; or, The Set-to at Secret Pass.
- 283—Diamond Dick's Four-footed Pard; or, Winning a Game Hands Down.
- 284—Diamond Dick's Cannon-Ball Special; or, Handsome Harry's Finest.
- 285—Diamond Dick's Flying Switch; or, Trapping the Tough-Nut Terrors.
- 286—Diamond Dick's Rush Orders; or, A Quick Windup at the Post.
- 287—Diamond Dick's Dutch Puzzle; or, the "Hot Tamale's" Hard Luck.
- 288—Diamond Dick at Full-Hand Ferry; or, Rough Work on Rapid River.
- 289—Diamond Dick and the Black Dwarf; or, Hot Work for Uncle Sam.
- 290—Diamond Dick and the Timber Thieves; or, A Close Call in Custer's Cañon.
- 291—Diamond Dick's Mid-Air Fight; or, At Odds with the Circus Crooks.
- 292—Diamond Dick in the Oil Fields; or, A Lively "Go" at the Big "Gusher."
- 293—Diamond Dick's Border Drama; or, A Scene Not Down on the Bills.
- 294—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s Marked Bullet; or, The Wreck of the Fast Mail.
- 295—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s Mind Reader; or, Fighting An All-Star Combination.
- 296—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Run of Luck; or, The Twist-Up at Terrible.
- 297—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Black Box; or, The Secret of Half a Million.
- 298—Diamond Dick, Jr., on the Stage; or, The Do-Up at Dangerfield.
- 299—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Big Wager; or, The Tiger of the Mesa.
- 300—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Daring Drift; or, Under Water Through Devil's Gulch.
- 301—Diamond Dick, Jr.'s, Diamond Clew; or, The Duke of Pokeropolis.

*All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your news-dealer, five cents a copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.*

**STREET & SMITH, PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK.**





# The BOYS' OWN LIBRARY

---

A SERIES OF BOOKS  
FOR BOYS BY

---

Edward S. Ellis  
Horatio Alger, Jr.  
James Otis  
Matthew White, Jr.  
Arthur M. Winfield  
George Manville Fenn  
Capt. Ralph Bonehill  
Wm. Murray Graydon  
Brooks McCormick

---

**T**HE BOYS' OWN LIBRARY consists of one hundred copyrighted titles published in this series only. The books are bound in cloth in highly illuminated cover designs, and equal in every respect to the average high-priced works. Price, 75 cents each. For sale at all first-class book stores. Catalogue on application to the Publishers, ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀ ❀

STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, NEW YORK